■ Nicholas Lemann on What's Wrong with Contemporary American Fiction

The Washington Monthly

FEBRUARY 1986/$2.50

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LETTERS

How wacky are facts?

I appreciate the thoughtful and intelligent review ["Born to Rob? Why Criminals Do It," James Fallows, December, 1985] of our book [*Crime and Human Nature*, James Q. Wilson, Richard Herrnstein]. Although the comments below are critical, I hope it is clear that my primary feeling about the review is gratitude, for the attention you paid our work and for the generally favorable evaluation.

Fallows says, approvingly, that *Crime and Human Nature* took a different position on intelligence testing from my earlier work. I have, he suggests, become more flexible and reasonable. I do not think that is what has happened, for my position as represented in our book is unchanged. What has changed, I would guess, is the willingness of commentators, such as Fallows, to accept the claim that the IQ measures a socially significant, somewhat heritable, trait. I'm pleased if my critics have changed their views, but it would be even more pleasing to have them acknowledging it.

Body-typing, Fallows says, is wacky. Can facts be wacky? Data show physique to be correlated with crime (and other social behaviors). *Crime and Human Nature* tried, unsuccessfully perhaps, to say that the correlation with physique posed a riddle—how to link static constitutional correlates to an account of actual behavior. My guess is that part of the problem he has in thinking about this material is that he does not understand this concept of physique, and we did not present enough material to convince him to take it seriously. Physique, as Sheldon conceived of it, is a more abstract entity than what is given by direct measurement of body parts.

On a more anecdotal level, consider Teddy Roosevelt—the sickly child who becomes the robust adult rough rider, by dint of effort and determination, according to legend. In fact, asthmatic children often seem frailer than they turn out to be when they outgrow their disease, as they commonly do. Everything I have read about Roosevelt as a child—his intensity, energy, and boldness—suggests the somatotonic personality type statistically associated with mesomorphy. A trained body-typer might have identified him as a mesomorph suffering from asthma. If one's body type could really be changed by effort and determination, there would be far fewer 97-pound weaklings having sand kicked in their faces, and I and most people I know would look rather different from the way we do.

RICHARD J. HERRNSTEIN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The author replies:

Richard Herrnstein is the best witness as to his own opinions, and if he says they haven't changed, I'm ready to believe him. But his public expression of them was certainly different in *Crime and Human Nature* from what it had been a dozen years before. Immediately before reading his new book, I'd reread *I.Q. in the Meritocracy*, which he published in 1973. That is, I had a chance to compare the books directly during a period in which my own views were not likely to have undergone dramatic revision. In the first book, Professor Herrnstein advanced an almost seamless view of the connection between IQ and occupational success. In the second, he and his co-author, James Q. Wilson, placed much more emphasis on the types of behavior that IQ does not determine or predict. Perhaps I have misinterpreted both books, but I bet that most readers would be impressed, as I was, by the differences in tone between them.

Can facts be wacky? If they're as thin as those used to defend the body-typing theory in *Crime and Human Nature*, they can certainly seem to be. Through most of its great length, Professor Herrnstein's book is dense with up-to-date, comprehensive, and seemingly objective studies. It was precisely because the "factual" evidence for body-typing—as provided in this book—was so feeble compared to everything else in the book that the whole proposition seemed wacky to me. As I mentioned in the review, the theory rests on a one-sentence assertion—"a skilled body-typer can take some account of such factors as age, nutrition, and health"—that, to me at least, is hardly convincing on

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its face. A single, much-debated criminological study provides a large proportion of the "factual" evidence for body-typing. As I said in the review, maybe the idea isn't crazy; but the reasons for taking it seriously, whatever they may be, are not obvious from reading this book.

Professor Herrnstein's interpretation of the Teddy Roosevelt story strikes me as a tautology: anyone who demonstrates the gumption to build himself up into a strongman must have been a latent mesomorph all along, his "real" body type concealed by disease or underdevelopment. Through junior high school, I was short and squat and played lineman on football teams. Suddenly I became tall and skinny and, finding football suicidal, took up track. Had I been a latent ectomorph even when I was blocking out the blitzing linebacker? My next-door neighbor put on 50 pounds of muscle and went the other way, from miler to fullback. I strongly doubt that any "skilled body typer," working from before-and-after photos of my friend's torso, would have guessed that he was dealing with the same body type, let alone the same person.

I will certainly admit that roving gangs of toughs contain a higher proportion of people who can bench-press 300 pounds than does the entering class of the Harvard Medical School. But they also have a higher proportion of people wearing Air Jordan shoes. It is not obvious to me that the muscles are a more significant "constitutional" factor than the shoes.

Meese the infamous

Your December issue presented a most interesting review by Paul M. Barrett of *God Save This Honorable Court* by Laurence Tribe. The role of Attorney General Edwin Meese III in skirmishes already taking place regarding anticipated attempts by the Reagan administration to reshape the composition of the Supreme Court was presented well. I think that Mr. Barrett was overly optimistic in commenting on Tribe's views on the role of the Senate in establishing acceptable outer limits of judicial attitudes. His statement "at the extremes, a majority of senators should be able to agree that a nominee is unfit" was proven *not* to be the case in regard to Mr. Meese himself!

Although the confirmation process dragged on for months and months for Ed Meese, our Senate could only muster 31 of 92 votes against an individual who was obviously manifestly unsuited to be the chief law enforcement officer of this nation. Even Senators Gorton and Evans of my own state of Washington were unable to exercise responsible judgment in the Meese case. The only hope I have in regard to future judicial appointments is that the performance of Mr. Meese is so bad that a sufficient number of people in public office are alerted to scrutinize them more carefully than ever.

Fortunately Ed Meese has kept himself in the public eye enough to help alert us to his activities. Two statements he made on the August 25, 1985, "This Week with David Brinkley" on ABC serve as examples. The first was when he said he thought the Supreme Court's Miranda decision was an "infamous" one. He followed this with the statement, "I think the idea that the police cannot ask questions of the person who knows most about the crime is an infamous decision." Wonderful! Our nation's number one lawyer is saying that being a suspect means you are guilty and thus obliged to waive your constitutional right against self-incrimination! Mr. Meese later made some "infamous" statements of his own in defending his department's handling of the E.F. Hutton case. He explained that the lack of prosecution of individuals was due to the necessity of granting blanket immunity to all involved. His statement that "nobody goes to jail because it was impossible to get a person who was not granted immunity who would go to jail" was shocking. How can you possibly get in such a situation with any competent investigation of a financial institution? Was he expecting us to believe Hutton kept no records of authorization or receipts of funds transfer? Have you ever tried to get some of your *own* money back from E.F. Hutton or your bank without providing them some record of the transaction?

Perhaps the Senate will improve its performance in the future in regard to the fitness of judicial appointees, but I must admit I do not share your optimism.

T. CARL PICKEL JR.
Belfair, Washington

YOU CAN HELP

Sometimes it's easy to forget how much *The Washington Monthly* depends on its readers. Our Memos of the Month come almost entirely from you. Clippings from readers' local papers inspire many of the items in Tidbits and Outrages and Tilting at Windmills. Readers help us in countless other ways, calling with tips for stories, giving their friends subscriptions, or just making sure we're on the shelves of their local newsstands, bookstores, and libraries.

If you live in the Washington area, you may be able to help us as a volunteer in our office. Just drop us a note telling us the work you're interested in, your experience, and the times you're available.

Resisting temptation

Every time that I am tempted to subscribe to *The Washington Monthly* by an interesting article, I promptly come across another one of your standardized editorial comments against the medical profession, such as the one in your December issue ["Tilting at Windmills"].

When I finally get home after a 60-hour week devoted to patient care (not counting *pro bono* time on call, in hospital committees, etc.), I really don't want to be made to feel guilty because the Toyota Tercel in my garage has, in your imagination, turned into a Rolls Royce or a Mercedes. I hardly think I or the rest of

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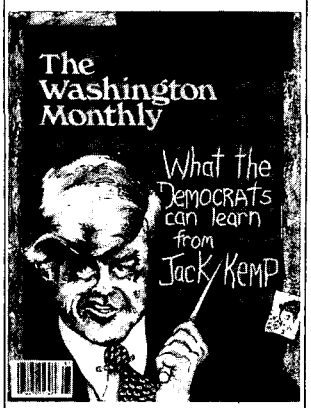

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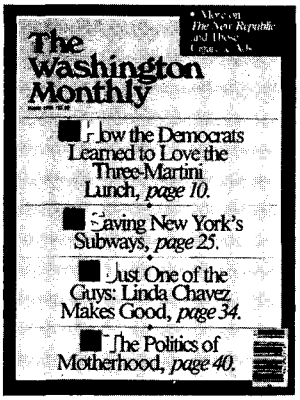

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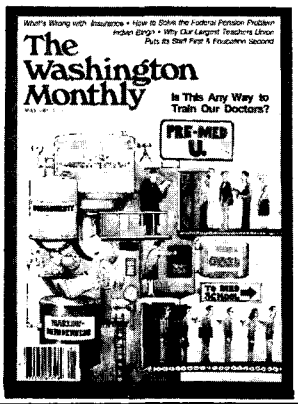

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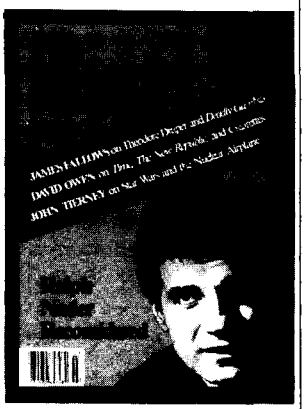

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my professional colleagues should be held responsible for the advertising quality that is sent to us in "throw-away" journals which are sent to us without our asking.

Nor do I feel responsible for the quasi-vacations that are offered in the guise of continuing medical education programs. A certain number of CME hours is mandated yearly by most states as a condition for keeping your medical license, so the origin of these meetings was a response to these requirements, not a maneuver to reduce taxes. Even in the worst of these meetings, only actual instructional time is counted toward the CME requirements. It is also unfortunate that in that 256-page publication you mention, you did not come across *any* of the major intensive professional meetings that occur each year, such as the American Heart Association annual meeting that recently finished in that well-known winter vacation paradise of Washington, D.C.

Finally, physicians are no more responsible for the high rate of cancer deaths and the high infant mortality rate in Washington than we are for Yul Brynner's death from lung cancer. The issues raised here have complex environmental and sociological roots, and you will not help solve problems like these by taking cheap standardized shots at physicians who are called in only when the disease process is beyond our help. Unfortunately also, the compulsory work that you mentioned in your editorial was outlawed by the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

M. S. BLUMENTHAL, M.D.
Monroe, Wisconsin

The cost of help

Charles Peters has been accused of many things except naivete. However, his remarks concerning the rising hours in the median work week ["Tilting at Windmills," December, 1985] suggest he is not aware of the relatively higher cost of paperwork and benefits involved in the hiring of additional employees.

It is usually cheaper to pay overtime. Of course, in the long run it may be more costly because productivity tends to slip as a result of a weary staff with a diminishing morale.

LEONARD KIAN
Dearborn, Michigan

The Washington Monthly

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TILTING AT WINDMILLS

"I'm sorry, he's in a meeting" has been the classic excuse secretaries use to help their bosses avoid unwanted telephone calls. Increasingly, however, the excuse is genuine. Business executives, according to a recent survey, now spend an average of 16.5 hours a week in meetings. This is roughly 40 percent of the work week and may go a long way toward explaining the decline of American competitiveness in world trade.

The Peters Principle—take care to distinguish it from the less persuasive Peter Principle—provides that organizations cease to function effectively when employees spend more than 15.8 percent of their time attending meetings or writing memoranda. When I was in the Peace Corps, I learned that when an organization is young and vigorous, its employees are filled with urgency and excitement about what they are doing. They can't bear to waste time attending formal meetings or fussing over the wording of a memo. They communicate by phone, by shouting across the room, and by catching one another in the hallways. It is not until they become more concerned with the appearance of action than with action itself that they begin to favor meetings. If you go to a meeting, it appears you are doing something. Indeed, you can even seem breathlessly busy as you pull on your coat and rush off, shouting over your shoulder, "Hold the phone calls, Mrs. Jones, I've got to make that two o'clock meeting in Smithers's office."

At the meeting itself, nothing happens. But it can still result in a press release saying that Secretary So-and-So and his aides held an urgent meeting on the farm problem today. The story will appear in the papers. An event seems to have occurred, the public's thirst for action is slaked, but nothing actually has happened. In the past, this sort of make-believe in Washington has been tolerable because there were enough tax revenues to pay for it. But what is to become of us if the businessmen whose enterprises are supposed to produce those revenues are playing the same make-believe themselves?....

If you read Paul Barrett's "Refund? What Refund? Why the IRS is Screwing Up" in our September 1985 issue, you will be interested to learn that *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has obtained IRS documents through the

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Freedom of Information Act that confirm our worst suspicions, including examples of taxpayer returns having been discarded by IRS employees in Philadelphia, Austin, Texas, and Kansas City, Missouri. An employee in Philadelphia tossed 92 returns into a wastebasket. But the champion was a fellow in California who didn't throw the returns away. He hid them. Because he wanted to conceal the fact that he could not process them on schedule, he hid 39 bags of mail, including $800,000-worth of refund checks, in his home. . . .

If Kitry Krause's article on the hazards of trucking deregulation (November 1985) left you somewhat apprehensive, consider what the California Highway Patrol found last fall when it conducted a surprise spot check of trucks on Route 152 at the summit of Pacheco Pass. The site had not been used previously for inspections, so it was not one that truck drivers had learned to avoid. 129 trucks were stopped. More than 80 percent had safety violations serious enough to be cited. About half had bad brakes. "41 percent were in such bad shape," according to the *San Jose Mercury News*, that the police "would not let them leave the inspection site until they had been repaired.". . .

We don't want to wake up finding that someone's long-lost nephew is the true owner of our home. So most of us buy title insurance to protect ourselves against claims that the title to our property may be defective. Like almost every other aspect of the real estate business, the sale of title insurance has developed a strong tradition of ethical marginality. One example is, as Sari Horwitz pointed out not long ago in *The Washington Post*, that often you are sold title insurance by the lawyer who represents you. How can he get the best deal on your insurance if he is also thinking of getting the best deal for himself on the commission that he will get for selling it to you. The title companies urge him to rise above any inclination he might have to put your interest first by offering commissions that range from 50 to 70 percent of the cost of the insurance.

To me, however, the most absurd aspect of title insurance is one the *Post* article failed to mention. It is that the same lawyer who sells you the title insurance is also the person you are paying to check the title for you. You pay him to go down to the courthouse and search the records and certify that the title is good. Then you pay him for insurance just in case he did a sloppy job. Shouldn't he be the one who is paying for the insurance to cover his errors?. . .

A lot of people were cynical about Ted Kennedy's motivation in withdrawing from the presidential race, attributing his decision solely to his fear of defeat. That fear may have been a factor, but I also believe his explanation that he wanted the press to stop giving a political interpretation to his every act. His recent trip to South Africa was the example he gave. Another example came soon after the announcement, when Kennedy went to West Virginia to visit the communities that had been devastated by the fall floods. If he had not withdrawn from the presidential race, the trip would have been viewed as a political gesture, designed to win West Virginia's support in 1988. Now it can be seen for what it truly was: an attempt to show the people of West Virginia that a United States senator cares about what has happened to them.

This magazine has been severely critical of Kennedy's private life. But, as a public man, we have found him to be a good senator, whose instincts are unfailingly generous. We hope his good qualities will now receive the recognition they deserve. . . .

Most of us have a sneaking suspicion that defense contracts are highly profitable for industry. But I didn't know how profitable until George Wilson of *The Washington Post* reported recently that "defense contractors made more than twice as much profit on government work as on commercial business."

One explanation for the profit comes from the story of what happened after the Sgt. York antiaircraft gun was canceled last year. Like me, I'm sure you thought this would result in a big saving for the taxpayer. But now comes Carla Lazzareschi of the *Los Angeles Times* with this news:

"The Pentagon confirmed that it will pay Ford Aerospace and Communications, the prime

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contractor, and its 2,000 subcontractors for all 146 of the tank-mounted gun systems that the Army had ordered, even though only 65 of them have actually been delivered."

Lt. Col. Craig McNab explained that the Army will pay the $1.8 billion even though "it would be pointless now for Ford to go ahead and assemble them."

The way to save money on canceled weapons is for the government to refuse to pay anything but the actual costs incurred by the contractor and the reasonable profit he would have expected to make on the work he has done....

The New Year brings with it new banking deregulation, so be sure to read your bank statement very carefully during the next few months. Note what fees and charges are being levied against your account. They may be eating a good part of that 7 percent interest that ads have promised you. You may also find that you aren't getting that 7 percent because your account fell below a certain figure for just one day. If you're being taken to the cleaners, switch to another bank, but be sure to keep an eye on it, too....

Another area of deregulation to be concerned about is what the local phone company is doing to you. Now that it is permitted to go into all kinds of other businesses, there's a danger that it will use its monopoly power over what it charges you to subsidize its entry into the various high-tech ventures that all of these companies seem to be planning....

I have been heartened by the recent explosion of awareness of a point this magazine has been making for years, namely that the elderly, far from all being needy, are often better off than the rest of us, and therefore a lot of people that are getting Social Security don't need it—and that the burden on the rest of us of providing for those who are not needy is becoming intolerable. In the past year, these facts have finally been faced in articles in *Scientific American*, *American Demographics*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, and *The Washington Post*.

Of all these publications, however, only the *Journal* made another point that is equally important. It is that while many of the elderly don't need Social Security—Claude Pepper gets $11,015, and Tip O'Neill and his wife collect $15,614—there are also many old people who not only need what they are getting, they need more. These are the people who depend on Social Security for all or almost all of their income. The *Journal*'s Clark Ansberry tells of one widow with a dependent daughter who gets just $408 a month. It's simply impossible for two people to live on that amount, let alone live decently.

Social Security shares two defects with unemployment compensation. Both are paid to rich and poor alike and thus waste money on the former. And both are paid on the basis of previous earnings. Because benefits are linked to previous earnings, low-income earners receive less when they need more.

Perhaps now that so many other publications are joining us in seeing what is wrong with the programs, it won't be long before they adopt our prescription as well as our diagnosis.

That prescription is, of course, to combine all the government's income maintenance programs into one program of insurance against need. Everyone would pay for it—I'm totally opposed to the various conservative schemes to privatize Social Security—but only those who become needy would collect.

"Just wait one minute," you say. "If I pay for it, shouldn't I be able to collect?" The answer is no. This would be like auto insurance. You are protected if you have an accident, but you get nothing if you don't. Or cancer insurance. You don't want to get cancer and you don't expect to be paid unless you do. Similarly, you

A JOB

We soon will have an opening for a reporter-editor. Desirable qualifications include practical experience working in or writing about politics and government. More important are intelligence, humor, and the willingness to work long hours for low pay. Applications should be accompanied by a list of at least three references and by writing samples, not necessarily published but designed to demonstrate fact-gathering and analytical ability.

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don't want to become needy and you won't be paid unless you do....

Everyone who writes a book worries about who will review it. The most chilling possibility is that the reviewer will be your worst enemy. That this happens, and not just rarely, was one of the revelations of a long article on book reviewing by David Shaw in the December 11 *Los Angeles Times*.

Last summer, for example, Paul Erdman reviewed a novel by Michael Thomas for *The New York Times*. Erdman said the book was a "tasteless exercise...an ego trip disguised as a novel."

The *Times* had every reason to expect just such a blast. Four years earlier Thomas had reviewed an Erdman novel for *The Saturday Review* and said: "It fails miserably."

Harold Willens's book on the nuclear arms race was assigned by *The Wall Street Journal* to a reviewer named Sam Cohen, who had frequently been Willens's opponent in debates on nuclear issues. "Asking Cohen to review my book," says Willens, "was like asking King George III to review Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*."

Gore Vidal says that he has repeatedly been asked to review books by Norman Mailer and the late Truman Capote, both of whom he has been widely known to detest. This sort of thing seems permissible—even fun—in a journal of opinion to whose predjudices its readers have reason to be on guard. But a biased review in a supposedly objective publication like *The New York Times Book Review* could be devastatingly unfair to author and reader alike.

One anecdote Shaw tells will warm the heart of every author who has been savaged by a scathing review, and fantasizes about the day the critic will realize that he has been dead wrong:

In 1949, Herb Gold wrote what he calls "a vicious review of Nelson Algren's *The Man with the Golden Arm*."

Today, Gold told Shaw, he thinks Algren's book is admirable, even remarkable. He says he wrote the original review out of frustration and envy, "out of my needs at the time" rather than as an honest piece of literary criticism....

A researcher has tracked the criminal history of every person born in Philadelphia in 1958 who continued to live in the city from 1968 to 1975. His study finds that only 7 percent of the group were chronically delinquent but that 7 percent committed 75 percent of all crimes done by their age group. When you put this together with previous studies that have shown that 80 percent of chronic juvenile criminals become chronic adult criminals, you can begin to see that there are some very bad kids out there whom, assuming they can be identified accurately, we should put away for a very long time even if they are kids....

One of the most heatbreaking failures of modern liberalism has been the deinstitutionalization of the mentaly ill. Far too many patients have been released who have proved incapable of caring for themselves. They have become a large, if not the largest, part of the tragic group called the homeless. Libertarians feel that it is just dandy for these people to have the freedom to stay out on the streets and freeze to death. But if you have ever loved anyone who is mentally ill, you do not want them to have the freedom to kill themselves while their mind is unsound. That's why I was pleased to see that New York has enacted a law permitting the police to forcibly remove the homeless from the streets when the temperature falls below freezing. In too many cities they are not picked up until they're ready to go to the morgue....

Citizenship Without Consent

Illegal Aliens in the American Polity

Peter H. Schuck
Rogers M. Smith

A controversial examination of birthright citizenship — one of the most sacrosanct but least examined American political institutions. Schuck and Smith argue that America's liberal democracy is based on the notion of political membership by consent, a concept inconsistent with the practice of granting citizenship by birth to the children of illegal aliens.

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More than 240 teachers in the District of Columbia public school system are absent each week, according to a recent article in *The Washington Post*. Perhaps they are ill, you say. A possibility, certainly, but one that tends to lose its persuasiveness as one discovers first that most of the absences are on Fridays and Mondays and second that the absenteeism rate among the District's teachers is more than double the national average for nonvacation absences by workers of all kinds.

Public employees do tend to take a lot of time off. After three years' service federal civil servants get 20 days of annual leave. This is vacation time. They also get 13 days of sick leave. Weekends are not counted. So 15 days of annual leave can produce a 21-day vacation. The five other days taken in conjunction with Christmas and New Year's can produce ten more days off, for a total of 31 for the year, without even beginning to use the sick leave, which is, by the way, cumulative so that what you don't use this year is tacked on to the future.

The Christmas-New Year parlay empties federal offices at the end of each year, with as much as 60 percent of the work force on leave. This is especially hard on the Postal Service, which of course needs its workers more than ever at Christmas. This year, John Nolan, the postmaster for New York City, was so desperate about the problem that he came up with an incentive program to reduce absenteeism: postal employees with perfect attendance records during the holidays will be eligible to receive two free tickets to the Broadway show of their choice....

There's still time to sign up for the Louisiana State Bar Association's Rome Congress to be held April 28-May 3. I have before me an eight-page brochure describing this event, only two sentences of which mention anything having to do with the law; otherwise every word is about sightseeing and entertainment. Do you think this will keep the Louisiana lawyers from deducting the cost of the trip from their taxes? Of course it won't. And it isn't just because they're from the same state as Governor Edwin ("You name it and I can get away with it") Edwards. It's because lawyers all over the country have come to accept this form of tax cheating as perfectly normal and legitimate. So, I realize, has practically everyone else. But I pick on the lawyers because they have a special obligation to uphold the law....

You may recall an item in "Tidbits and Outrages" last year about how the Boston Red Sox were using a segregated social club in Florida. The man who originally told the *The Boston Globe* about this practice, a black coach named Tommy Harper, was subsequently fired by the Red Sox for having talked to the press. This led the *Globe* to point out that after the firing of Harper, the Red Sox "do not have one black coach, minor league manager, or full-time instructor in the organization....and haven't won a World Series since 1918.".. .

Traditional morality may reflect a considerable amount of folk wisdom, as recent research, reported in *Psychology Today*, indicates. In only 10 percent of the cases studied did both partners feel that divorce had improved their lives. Another finding strongly supportive of tradition is in Polly Toynbee's new book, reviewed on page 58 of this issue, on adopted children. When adoptees try to find a natural parent, Toynbee reports, they invariably seek their mothers....

Federal employees have another characteristic, which, like their propensity for taking time off, is not in the public interest. It is that, when jobs become available in their agencies, they keep the fact a secret from those members of the public who might want to apply so that they can tip off their friends to the vacancy. This is called the buddy system, which also involves writing a job description that can be met only by the friend. How is the news of the opening kept from the general public? Let UPI's Iris Krasnow tell the story:

"Securing government agency employment in Washington is no easy task, but finding the phone numbers to find the jobs may be tougher yet.

"Most employment hot lines are unlisted....Among the agencies with unlisted job information numbers are the U.S. Information Agency, the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, and Transportation, the CIA, the FBI, the U.S.

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Army, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the Smithsonian Institution.". . .

I have written about my concern that the modern middle class cares more about imitating its betters than in helping those it has left behind. The latest example is "buppies." They are the increasingly affluent black urban professionals. A new magazine called *EM* has been created especially for the males among them. Its inaugural issue is, according to *Time*, "filled with photos of immaculate male models decked out in silk ties, Shetland-wool blazers, and camel-hair overcoats." One article is called "A Guide to Investing in a Leather Couch."

A recent illustration of this trend is Ivanhoe Donaldson, the brilliant Washington Buppie who was Mayor Marion Barry's top assistant and political guru. Donaldson spent too much of his time not using his brain to help meet the terrible problems of the city's poor black population but instead figuring out how to steal money from the taxpayers to finance his taste in fancy cars and restaurants.

Donaldson will be the third person close to the mayor to go to jail, joining Barry's former wife and former girlfriend. In each case, the crime was committed while the person was close to Barry. At the time of these transgressions, both the ex-wife and Donaldson were driving Mercedes they scarcely could have afforded on their regular salaries. Yet the mayor was not suspicious. This seems curious to me. . . .

Ever since George Will achieved stardom by quoting Edmund Burke every other Thursday, political writers have been searching for ways to add a touch of class to their act. Sometimes their efforts fail to convey the erudition they intend. For example, in December Pat Caddell wrote this in *The Wall Street Journal:*

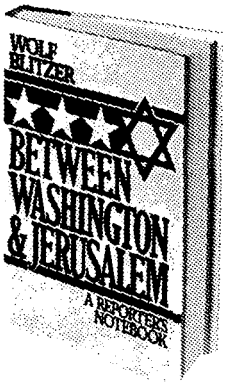
"We are so Copernican here in Washington; we think the whole world revolves around us."

Just, of course, as Ptolemy thought the earth revolves around the sun. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

A behind-the-scenes look at the machinery that drives American-Israeli relations

From the acclaimed Washington Bureau Chief of The Jerusalem Post



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BANKING ON UNREAL ESTATE

The Appraisal Scam

by Kenneth Weiss

When Richard Hewitt was poring over financial records of the ailing Community Savings & Loan in Bethesda, Maryland, his eyes fell upon a troubling list of approved real estate appraisers. As a federal banking investigator, Hewitt knew some of the listed appraisers had "very fine reputations." But strangely, each of the reputable names was crossed out. Scribbled in the margin next to them were the words, "Do not use."

One of the blacklisted appraisers later told Hewitt that Community's subsidiary, Equity Programs Investment Corporation (EPIC), had asked him to use an unethical method to establish the value of a 200-unit condominium complex. EPIC wanted him to ignore the fact that the condos were both vacant and located in an area notorious for its vast number of unoccupied condominium projects—two characteristics that can greatly diminish property value. When the appraiser declined to set market value "out of context," EPIC officials struck him from the list and turned to someone else.

Hewitt stumbled on the list while investigating a wide-reaching scandal involving shaky EPIC property loans and the downfall of Community Savings. This peculiar list shows more than just another element of the EPIC collapse, which has forced 20,000 homes into foreclosure, rattled the mortgage industry, and threatens investors with hundreds of millions of dollars in losses. It provides a rare glimpse inside perhaps the biggest con in the real estate industry: grossly exaggerated appraisals. Although previously tolerated as an improper but innocuous part of the real estate game, it is now becoming clear that bogus appraisals were a major cause of the collapse of EPIC, as well as hundreds of savings and loans and banks such as Continental Illinois, the largest failure of all. In the past three years, 322 savings and loans have failed or had serious financial troubles because of faulty or fraudulent appraisals, according to the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. And, incredibly, even though massive over-appraisals have contributed to case after case of bank and S&L failures, most federal regulators are turning their heads, insisting it is only a minor part of the banking crisis.

Setting up the con

An unbiased, accurate appraisal is the cornerstone of a good real estate loan. Lending institutions rely on professional appraisers to determine

Kenneth Weiss is a reporter for States News Service.

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the market value of property and hence the true value of the collateral being offered for the loan. If the appraiser is on target, bankers know the value of the property will be enough to cover the loan in the event the borrower stops paying.

But the nation's 150,000 to 250,000 appraisers aren't always on target. Not surprisingly, most of the inaccuracies fall on the side of inflating the value of property rather than diminishing it. Some of it is simply sloppy work. But more often than not, over-appraisals are deliberate schemes that benefit the real estate investor, the developer, the appraiser, and sometimes the lender but end up hurting the rest of us when the plan unravels.

Here's how it works. Let's say a Houston developer has built 100 condominiums in a particular neighborhood. He sells 90 of them for $100,000 apiece before the local real estate market takes a steep downturn. Prices plummet and for six months the panicked developer is unable to sell the last ten units, which are uncomfortably close to a noisy intersection. As an inducement to potential investors, the developer agrees to chop $10,000 off the cost of each of the remaining condos through some financial gymnastics that effectively lower the interest rate on the loan. He does this by paying $10,000 to a lender, who in turn lowers the interest rate for a real estate loan. With those incentives in place, a real estate speculator pledges to buy the last ten units.

The speculator and the developer then work together to turn the decline in real estate value to their advantage. They call in an appraiser, an independent consultant who is supposed to examine the property, its surrounding area, and its financial history to determine the property's market value. Most likely the appraiser has worked with them before and knows what's expected. The appraiser sets the value of each condo at $100,000, ignoring the market decline and the fact that the units are being sold, in effect, for $90,000.

With that appraisal in hand, the condo buyer goes to the local savings and loan. For collateral he offers property valued at $100,000, even though its actual worth is $90,000. Eager to lend money and perhaps even complicitous in the planning of this deal, the S&L officer accepts the $100,000 figure. Because the $10,000 reduction to the buyer comes in the form of an interest discount, not an out-and-out price cut, the lender can pretend that the value is $100,000 and use the inflated appraisal to validate the fiction. The S&L officer also knows that if he plays too strictly by the rules, the speculator will take his business elsewhere. Since this real estate speculator is considered a good risk, he is able to get a loan covering 95 percent of the listed purchase price for each condo. So he now has $950,000 in loans even though he is paying only $900,000 for the condos. He uses that extra $50,000 to invest in other high-yield enterprises and pockets the profits.

In an ideal world, it is a con without a victim. In this case, the developer was able to unload unwanted property and walk away from the whole housing development with a profit. The speculator was able to secure loans larger than needed and purchase ten condominiums without spending a dollar of his own money. The appraiser took home a fee and a promise for future business. He was not likely to have been one of the appraisers with "Do Not Use" scribbled next to his name. The local savings and loan, probably plagued by an anemic cash flow, was able to draw in new loans and new loan fees. If the property appreciates quickly and the investor continues to make his monthly mortgage payments, no one should ever know the difference.

But today's property market is far from ideal. Real estate players can no longer rely on double-digit inflation to boost property values automatically. (In the 1970s, inflation fueled such rapid real estate appreciation that in a short time real property values often caught up with bloated appraisals.) Worst of all, more and more investors and homeowners are defaulting on their loans, leaving banks and S&Ls with large, outstanding loans and forcing them to cash in the collateral. At that point, faulty appraisals become noticeable.

If, for example, that Houston condominium owner, for whatever reason, defaults on his loan, the S&L seizes the property and sells it to pay off the loan. But when the S&L tries to sell the ten condos, it discovers they are worth only $900,000 or even less. The S&L then swallows a $50,000 loss and probably more because banks often have to sell low to get rid of property quickly. Ultimately, if the S&L goes under or requires a government bailout, the taxpayers may wind up picking up the bill. This example is on a tiny scale compared to the over-appraisals involved in companies like EPIC or Continental Illinois, in which hundreds of millions of dollars in losses are projected.

In addition to the 322 savings and loans that have failed or floundered since 1983 because of faulty appraisals, federal regulators are discovering that many ostensibly healthy lending institutions hold loans based on bloated property values. In 1984 alone, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board found "serious appraisal problems"

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One appraiser valued undeveloped land at $29,000 an acre even though nearby property was $5,000 an acre. He based his assessment on what the land would be worth if surrounded by a luxurious country club and golf course—neither of which was in the works.

in 359 S&Ls with property values boosted $1.8 billion over their actual worth. Also, some of the large commercial banks on the federal government's financial worry list have badly misappraised real estate holdings. A six-month study by the House Government Operations subcommittee on commerce, consumer and monetary affairs concluded that "real estate appraisal abuses seem to be a serious problem of national proportions."

EPIC proportions

The most infamous example is EPIC itself. EPIC's 20,000 homes are now worth about 25 percent less than their appraised value, according to federal banking regulators. And the list of friendly and unfriendly appraisers stumbled on by federal investigators would seem to indicate the exaggerated estimates did not materialize accidentally, although EPIC officials could not be reached for comment. With its dramatic collapse last fall, EPIC stopped making payments on $1.3 billion in mortgages, forcing the homes into foreclosure.

A key to EPIC's initial success, according to real estate experts, was its ability to buy homes at below-market prices while borrowing money based on full-market appraisals. Generally, EPIC purchased houses that big builders had trouble selling, such as the dregs of large housing projects. Many of EPIC's homes were also in areas with weak housing markets, including Houston, Dallas, Washington state, and Colorado. In return for picking up the unwanted housing, builders gave EPIC discounts of up to 25 percent off the purchase price. Since the loans were based on full market price, EPIC was awash in extra loan money, enabling the company's officials to make money off each home purchase. Yet the EPIC investment deals were structured so they didn't generate enough rent or other income to keep up with the mortgage payments. EPIC officials had to make up the shortfall by constantly bringing in new investors or borrowing money from Community Savings. They knew that if the stream stopped, EPIC would collapse.

That's exactly what happened last August when federal regulators told Community Savings that if it wanted federal insurance, it would have to dump EPIC. This left EPIC officials with no choice but to stop borrowing money from the S&L and quit bringing in new partners. Now the losses are being counted. Community Savings could lose as much as $100 million it sank into EPIC property deals. But ultimately the taxpayers will end up paying a big chunk of the costs. The collapse of Community and several other Maryland S&Ls has bankrupted the state's private insurance system. Faced with pressure from angry depositors, Maryland guaranteed the S&L's deposits. The legislature is now considering a plan to spend $70 million this year and could eventually pay more than $100 million on top of that. Federal officials estimate that at least 5,800 private investors, many of whom bought the homes as tax shelters, will have to absorb $300 million in losses. Maryland officials, who have taken over Community and EPIC and tossed out the former owners, hope the figure is exaggerated. But the ultimate loss will be determined when creditors try to sell the homes for whatever they can get. Congressional investigators looking into fraudulent appraisals say they have collected "numerous examples" of EPIC properties that were appraised 50 percent to 100 percent over their real value.

EPIC's collapse has shaken the entire $20-billion private mortgage securities industry as well as the mortgage insurance industry. At least ten U.S. mortgage insurers and another ten companies in Europe and the U.S. that insure the insurers face claims totaling $400 million. Nearly 100 S&Ls hold EPIC mortgages backed by overvalued properties. In addition, major Wall Street investment houses that buy mortgages from S&Ls and trade them on the securities market are afraid the EPIC collapse will scare away investors.

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Salomon Brothers, the largest trader in the mortgage-backed securities market, has even tried to put together an industry plan to bail out or buy out EPIC to prevent a crisis of confidence in the secondary mortgage market—once thought to be one of the safest investments around.

Fictional golf courses

Other banks and S&Ls around the country have encountered massive real estate over-appraisals. Federal banking examiners found 411 instances of faulty or fraudulent property appraisals when they examined the records of the failed Empire Savings and Loan in Mesquite, Texas. The case is a classic example of "land flips," a lucrative scam in which a group of collaborators sell land among themselves, each time artificially raising the property's value with new, bloated appraisals. In some cases the property's value triples in a day or two. Independent auditors discovered that Empire's $59.3 million in real estate collateral was actually worth $7.9 million.

Federal regulators last July seized Sunrise Savings & Loan in Boynton Beach, Florida. The troubled S&L may sustain as much as $200 million in losses, mostly from over-appraised real estate. In one instance, an appraiser valued undeveloped land at $29,000 an acre even though nearby property went for no more than $5,000 an acre. The appraiser based his assessment on what the land would be worth if surrounded by a luxurious country club and golf course—neither of which was in the works.

Lest you think the appraisal racket is stinging only smaller S&Ls, Bank of America of San Francisco lost $95 million in 1984 because property loans it handled were based on fraudulent appraisals. And over-appraisals played a role in the biggest blowout of all, the near-collapse of Continental Illinois Bank and Trust Company. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) has testified that it will have to absorb at least a $200-million loss from overvalued real estate in the bailout of Continental. After purchasing real estate appraised at $400 million on Continental's books, the FDIC discovered the land was worth only half that amount.

Failures to notice

Despite the growing number of government bailouts and mounting losses, most bank regulators treat the over-appraisal problem as if it were little more than a bounced check to the corner grocery. Take, for example, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, which insures all U.S. commercial banks and regulates state-chartered banks that are not members of the Federal Reserve system. Even though the FDIC will have to pay $200 million just to cover overvalued real estate holdings of Continental Illinois, the agency insists that it need not pursue tighter restrictions on appraisals. "We feel that the ones we have in place now are adequate," says George J. Masa, assistant director of the FDIC's division of bank supervision.

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, which regulates the country's 5,000 national banks, including Continental, didn't seem to mind Continental's inflated appraisals either. In a letter to Rep. Doug Barnard, chairman of the monetary affairs subcommittee, a representative of the Comptroller's office said that its examiners, in viewing Continental's records, "did not disclose any real estate appraisal abuses warranting disciplinary action or criminal referral."

The Comptroller's office, the FDIC, and the Federal Reserve System all believe that poor assessment of a loan applicant's ability, or rather inability, to repay is the main problem with troubled banks and therefore federal supervisors need not focus on appraisal abuses. In other words, provided the borrower is worthy of credit, the regulators contend, the value placed on real estate collateral shouldn't matter.

This view is naive. No matter how closely lending institutions screen their loan applicants, a certain number of loans fail, about 3 percent on

If the federal insurance corporations run out of money, who is going to pick up the tab? For the answer to that question, take a look at Maryland, where taxpayers will end up financing a bailout.

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average for property loans. Even borrowers with impeccable credit records fail on their loan payments from time to time. If the underlying property is overvalued, then banks and S&Ls will lose money when the property is sold at foreclosure. Moreover, failing to deal with over-appraisals on the grounds that "bad bank loans" are the real problem simply ignores an important part of the bank crisis. A loan based on an over-appraisal *is* a bad bank loan. "The fact remains that a risky loan is easier, and in some cases, possible to make only when it is buttressed by an appraisal that falsely overvalued the collateral," Rep. Barnard points out.

"The only way that the FDIC or Comptroller's arguments make sense is if they had only one bank failure a year," said a congressional investigator who spent six months probing appraisal problems. "But they are hiring scores of attorneys for their liquidation staffs. Their attitudes border on gross irresponsibility."

Just last year the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, which runs the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation, closed ten S&Ls, seized another 25 S&Ls to install new boards of directors and managers, and assisted 22 others in merging with healthier institutions. A recent General Accounting Office study estimated that 42 percent of the nation's S&Ls either are already broke or have dangerously low net worths. The FDIC, meanwhile, has counted 120 bank failures for 1985, with another 1,100 of the nation's 15,000 banks on the agency's problem list. There have been so many S&L failures and bailouts that, according to *The Washington Post*'s Hobart Rowen, "the FSLIC is running out of money." If the FSLIC or FDIC do run out of money, who is going to pick up the tab? For the answer to that question, take a look at what happened in Maryland when the collapse of the S&Ls caused a run on the Maryland Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation, producing tremendous pressure on state officials to have the taxpayers finance a bailout.

Incredibly, of the four federal banking agencies in a position to stop the appraisal abuses, only one has taken the minimal step of requiring any appraisal for real estate loans.

Call in the feds

Although property over-appraisals are by no means the only cause of bank failures, they are dramatically magnifying the effects of loan defaults in S&Ls and banks throughout the country. It is not necessary to screen old newsreels of bank failures during the Depression to realize that a financial system collapse is something worth avoiding. Fortunately, there are common sense steps that can be taken to help defuse the problem. Ideally, the banks themselves would take responsibility for screening the fraudulent and faulty appraisals. But the lending institutions are in no position to be diligent. The realities of the market virtually force them to accept shady appraisals. They know that if they question the veracity of an evaluation the developer will take the business elsewhere. "Builders and developers always go the course of least resistance," said Hewitt, a former examiner with the Bank Board. It is just too easy to shop around for a bank or S&L that is willing to look the other way. "The poor S&L is caught between a rock and a hard place," he said. If it strictly follows the rules, it loses business. If it doesn't, it puts its financial well-being in jeopardy. In today's lackluster banking economy, there are too many eager lenders chasing too few qualified borrowers. This type of borrowers' market means there is little chance lenders will do anything—unless compelled by government action. Only government intervention with a common set of rules can convince the players in the real estate game that they don't have to cheat to keep ahead of the competition.

Incredibly, of the four federal banking agencies in a position to stop the appraisal abuses, only the Federal Home Loan Bank Board has taken the minimal step of even requiring an appraisal for real estate loans. The Bank Board, which supervises federally insured S&Ls, does require lenders to have an appraisal for each real estate loan and reviews appraisals during routine examinations. The policy has had an uphill battle,

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though. A real estate developer who has been turned down for a loan by a conscientious S&L officer demanding an accurate appraisal can go across the street to a commercial bank that doesn't require an appraisal at all. To avoid losing out, S&Ls will often tolerate exaggerated appraisals.

A first step toward solving the appraisal problem therefore would be for all the regulatory agencies at least to require independent appraisals by people who are not beholden to the parties to the transaction. Mandating this for all lenders—no matter who they're regulated by—would dampen the incentive to continue these unethical and risky practices. In addition, as a regular part of their oversight, all federal examiners should audit real estate loans to check for appraisals. We don't need a vast army of special bank police to make it work. If checks were random so all parties knew they might be examined at any time, if penalties were stiff, and if those involved knew the examiner might actually drive out and see that expensive dream condo is near a noisy intersection, then the fear of detection would be instilled in the hearts of all the players. After all, the IRS, in its prouder days, didn't have to audit everyone to make us fear that we might be next.

Finally, we need to make sure that the regulators themselves don't have an incentive to hush up the real estate scandals. In the Maryland S&L crisis, a top official of the regulatory office had been presented with extensive evidence of wrongdoing but was paralyzed by fear that exposing and punishing the misconduct would cause a run on the banks and consequently a run on the state S&L insurance agency. To prevent regulators from treading lightly, we should require that results of federal examinations of real estate loans be made public within three months. This would guarantee that the regulators, however much they might be tempted to cover up, could not do so. Everyone involved in the transaction, from the appraiser to the regulator, would know that phony appraisals should not be used and real estate loans should not be based on them.

If lenders become convinced they are playing on an even field and that cheaters are likely to be caught and punished, they might come to see that it's in their own economic interests to weed out bogus appraisals. Lending institutions would avoid millions of dollars in potential losses if they hired a few staff experts or outside consultants to review all appraisals used for loans. For banks with a history of questionable real estate loans, the regulatory agencies could require that the banks hire an appraisal reviewer as a condition for federal insurance. "As a practical matter, any of the surviving S&Ls are going to have to have an in-house review. . . . It is a blueprint for disaster where you rely on an appraisal that comes in at the door," said Hewitt, who now reviews appraisals as a banking consultant in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

The lending institutions are in no position to be diligent. They know that if they question the veracity of an evaluation, the developer will take the business elsewhere. In this type of borrower's market there is little chance lenders will stop these dubious practices —unless compelled by government action.

Guy Reese is a living example of how the system should work. Reese, who used to review appraisals for the Bank Board, now provides the same service for a Dallas-based S&L, Sunbelt Savings Association. In the past year, Reese and his staff have reviewed about 500 applications for property loans and sent back 90 percent of the appraisals for corrections or modifications. The great majority of the serious deficiencies, Reese said, resulted from "a failure of the appraiser to provide an unbiased, objective estimate of market value." If Reese doesn't accept the appraisal, the loan isn't made. Jack Sommerfield, vice chairman of Sunbelt Savings, said his board is pleased with Reese's results so far. "We are confident that it is going to save us some money. We know day in and day out that this is a better way to go." Sunbelt, a large S&L with $3 billion in assets, is one of a handful of lenders that have taken positive steps to protect themselves against faulty or fraudulent appraisals and the havoc they can wreak. The trend will have to grow if the nation's lenders are to survive. ■

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

When an editor from this magazine recently asked **Donald Regan** how the White House could claim to be serious about reducing the deficit when it was unwilling to cut the military budget, Regan replied that he was ready to take on the Pentagon. While emphasizing that he was for a strong defense, Regan said he now realizes he has been too deferential to the military, too dazzled by their expertise, and too accepting of the service's own version of it's financial needs.

Regan may encounter problems in carrying out his new policy. First, he needs OMB's expertise to find the holes in the Pentagon's case. Unfortunately, OMB is pretty out of practice at cutting defense since its sword was bent out of shape in the first battle with **Caspar Weinberger** in 1981. The second problem is Regan's boss, **Ronald Reagan**, who so far has always saluted whatever the military runs up the flagpole....

Regan seems secure these days. His only potential enemy with any power is **Nancy Reagan**. While she did make some pointedly pro-McFarlane comments to the press during the recent Regan-McFarlane power struggle, she has seemed, as we have reported, to accept **Stuart Spencer**'s counsel that there is no present alternative to Donald Regan. Regan's detractors continue to point to his liabilities: 1) he doesn't know House Democrats and since they control one part of the government, this is a serious drawback; 2) as a former Marine officer, he is excessively impatient with dissenting opinions from subordinates, particularly those of junior grade, who often have the freshest ideas....

The White House fears that **Senator Robert Packwood**, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, will use tax reform as an excuse to institute a value-added tax. Despite strong dissent from its pragmatic wing, the administration opposes any new tax as well as any effort to use tax reform to increase revenue. Donald Regan says that to him the most important goals of tax reform are decreasing the number of poor people who pay taxes and lowering the marginal rates....

A fox in the chicken coop for the second time? **J. Steven Griles**, who fought against strip mining control when he was a Virginia official in the 1970s and while he was at the Office of Surface Mining in the 1980s, has been named assistant secretary of the Interior for Land and Minerals Management....

In

WHITE HOUSE

Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs—**Donald Fortier** has been political and military aide to the National Security Council.

DEFENSE

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works—**Robert K. Dawson** has been principal deputy assistant secretary.

EDUCATION

General Counsel—**Wendell L. Wilkie II** has been chief of staff.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Undersecretary—**Donald M. Newman** has been with Indiana's governmental affairs office in Washington.

JUSTICE

Associate Attorney General—**Arthur I. Burns** has been a partner in the New York law firm of Burns, Jackson Miller, Summit and Jacoby.

STATE

Assistant Secretary for Politico-Military Affairs—**H. Allen Holmes** has been ambassador to Portugal.

Assistant Secretary for Intelligence Research—**Morton I. Abramowitz** has been director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Postmaster General—**Albert Casey** has been chairman of American Airlines.

Chairman, Federal Trade Commission—**Daniel Oliver** has been general counsel at the Department of Agriculture.

Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation—**L. William Seidman** has been dean of the business school at Arizona State University.

Out

AGRICULTURE

Secretary—**John R. Block** has resigned.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Governmental and Public Affairs and Director of Congressional Relations—**John Ford** has resigned.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Postmaster General—**Paul Carlin** has been fired.

Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission—**Nunzio J. Palladino** will retire June 30.

Chairman, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation—**William M. Isaac** will become a partner in the Washington law firm, Arnold and Porter.

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LIFE AND DEATH IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM—PART II

AN AMERICAN HERO

Dr. David Boyd and Emergency Health Care

Dr. David Boyd pours the evening's fourth cup of coffee in his cluttered, windowless Washington office. Talking about his years in government, he says, "The thing about being a bureaucrat, a maverick bureaucrat, is that if you have a reasonably good enough argument and balls enough to stick with it, you can win a lot of battles." Putting the urn back in the coffee machine, he says, "The thing is, nobody ever tries."

It's a lesson he learned from experience. In the early seventies, Dr. Boyd turned in his surgeon's scrubs for a bureaucrat's suit, and quickly rose to the directorship of something called Emergency Medical Services (EMS), a division of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). You may not have heard of Boyd, or EMS, but you probably take for granted the changes he and his agency brought about. The division existed only from 1974 to 1981, when the Reagan administration pulled its plug by turning its funding into block grants to state governments. But in those years, Boyd orchestrated a revolution in emergency medical care. In the course of it, he convinced some of his colleagues he was an "egomaniac," "despot," "visionary," and "pain in the ass." Yet the changes he helped bring about were so sweeping that, in the words of former co-worker Dr. John Otten, Boyd has probably "been responsible for saving many more thousands of lives than anyone in the medical profession today."

How Boyd turned his federal program into a catalyst for positive change, instead of another government boondoggle, is a story in itself. The program was meant to give states and municipalities "assistance and encouragement"—otherwise known as the pork barrel—for projects like improving ambulance services and training volunteer firemen in new medical techniques. What kept the division from fulfilling its destiny as yet another do-nothing agency was, by all accounts, Boyd. Now, thanks in large part to him, hospital emergency rooms have been revamped and staffed with a new breed of specially trained emergency physicians. Almost half a million ambulance personnel have been trained in basic and advanced life support. Well-equipped paramedic vans are now a familiar sight as they fly down city streets. Victims of severe heart attacks, burns, poisonings, and serious injuries, people whose lives were once written off, are being saved by the thousands. In short, high quality emergency service has become an expected government function, the "third public force" after fire and police protection.

These were not small achievements. As Dr. Mark Vasu, an expert in emergency cardiology explains, "Prior to Dave's program, there was virtually no training, no standards, no 'system' of emergency care in this country." Hospital

Paul Glastris is a regular contributor to The Washington Monthly.

by Paul Glastris

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emergency rooms were notorious as the dumping ground for inept physicians. The nation's ambulance drivers were so untrained that few knew how to put an IV into a bleeding patient.

But there's a disturbing story in the one key reform Boyd failed to implement. This, as described in the first part of this article (November 1985) was his "trauma systems" concept. In a nutshell, Boyd proposed setting up super-equipped "trauma centers" in selected hospitals, to which the most serious trauma patients ("trauma" is an umbrella term for injury) would be taken automatically. This mandatory diversion of patients away from less well-equipped emergency rooms, Boyd believed, would lead to dramatic improvements in emergency care.

Boyd had strong evidence to support that belief. Unfortunately, thousands of Americans continue to die every year of perfectly treatable injuries because he couldn't get his trauma system installed nationwide. It wasn't for lack of effort. "He had a ferocious intensity, an evangelical fervor—the success of the program was more important to him than his own career," recalls James Page, a California fire chief and publisher of *JEMS*, a trade magazine for paramedics. Dr. Michael Rhodes, a government EMS adviser in Pennsylvania, agrees: "Dave could have walked out of government and onto the staff of any medical school in the country." But he spent too many years in the bureaucracy, and his medical skills dulled. Now Boyd makes his living as a private "EMS adviser" with a small Washington consulting firm.

What killed the nationwide trauma system Boyd envisioned was opposition from the nation's medical establishment. The great irony is that a good deal of the opposition grew out of the innovations of David Boyd. Doctors and hospital administrators, who a decade or two before probably would not have worried about emergency care, came to perceive the idea as a threat to their power, prestige, and pocketbooks. That Boyd did his job, in a sense too well, is only one of the ironies of this story. To understand how all this happened, we need to examine some history.

MASH factor

The trauma center idea comes from the U.S. Army. In World War II, soldiers injured in battle were taken first to battalion aid stations, then to hospitals well behind the battle lines. This often caused 12-hour delays in getting them to surgery. In Korea, the U.S. Army Medical Corps decided this wasn't good enough. Instead, they transported the wounded, often by helicopter, to nearby Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals, now universally known as MASH units. There, surgical teams were ready to operate 24 hours a day. This reduced the waiting time by two-thirds. And since sewing up and caring for the wounded was the only medicine MASH doctors and their staffs practiced, their skills and teamwork were honed to near perfection. As a result, the mortality rate for wounded soldiers in Korea was half what it had been in World War II.

Photo: Susan Stevens

Colleagues have called David Boyd an "egomaniac," "despot," "visionary," and "pain in the ass."

It would take years, however, before the lesson of the MASH units was learned in America. For the medical community at home, it was business as usual. The federal government did nothing during this period to change the pattern of emergency care, and it confined its involvement in medical matters to a few areas. It subsidized a massive hospital construction program—the origin of our chronic oversupply of beds. Congress also poured research money into medical schools, stimulating the production of a greater number of highly trained specialists. Moreover, there was a decline in the number of general practitioners entering the workforce. The old-style family doctor, though not exactly a vanishing breed, was getting considerably harder to find.

Consequently, by the 1960s, more and more

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people were showing up in hospital emergency rooms (ERs), looking for the physician care they otherwise couldn't find. The ERs weren't much of a substitute. Hospitals devoted scant resources to them since administrators believed the ER was a drain on revenues. Few ERs had physicians staffing them around the clock, and many doctors who worked the ER beat had reputations, even among their peers, for incompetence. "The ER was a terrible place to work," recalls Dr. Stan Zidlow, head of emergency medicine at Chicago's Northwest Community Hospital. "We called it 'the pit.' "

All those non-emergency patients flooding into ERs soon helped focus America's attention on the scandalously poor care available to patients with real emergencies. The number of Americans who died each year on the nation's streets and highways roughly equaled the number that eventually died in Vietnam. Street violence was also on the rise and accounted for an increasing number of emergency cases. But the comparison with Vietnam is instructive, because with the Army's superior emergency medical systems, a soldier shot in Vietnam stood a statistically better chance of surviving than a civilian shot on an average American street corner. To get some idea of how primitive emergency services in this country were, consider this statistic from an influential 1966 study: half of the vehicles being used as ambulances were operated by morticians —the ultimate conflict of interest.

It took some time, but gradually this demand conjured suppliers. Groups of doctors, scattered around the country, began to see real profit potential in ERs. Forming partnerships, they contracted with hospital administrators to take over the headache of having to staff and operate their ERs. With more and more Americans using ERs like doctors' offices, the partnerships eventually blossomed into corporations, and the physicians who owned them became rich.

Meanwhile, other physicians were experimenting with ways of delivering needed services beyond the hospital. A few doctors in the early sixties realized that firemen, equipped with the newly created tools of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), could be trained to defibrilate heart-attack victims in the street and keep them alive long enough to get them to a hospital. Elsewhere, reform-minded physicians were training nurses in their local communities to treat problem pregnancies and accidental poisonings in the field.

These efforts were far-flung and controversial. Many physicians disliked mere nurses and firemen performing medical procedures hitherto reserved for doctors. But the benefits were undeniable, and considerable positive press resulted. The federal government itself got involved in 1966 when Lyndon Johnson sent Congress his Traffic Safety Act, which eventually pumped millions into state governments through the Department of Transportation for the purpose of developing uniform highway safety programs. Some states began putting EMS offices in their health departments and writing basic standards for ambulances and personnel training.

Choppers and cutters

The greatest forward leaps in emergency care, however, came from physicians and others who had served in the Army and knew its advanced systems firsthand. Perhaps the most famous of these is Dr. R.A. Cowley of the University of Maryland. An Army surgeon in France during World War II, Cowley conducted research in the sixties for the U.S. government on the phenomenon of shock, the "cell suffocation" that results from the hemorrhaging caused by most serious injuries. Shock triggers wild oscillations in the body's biochemistry, which in turn can lead to organ failure and death. Cowley found the best way to save lives is to sew up a patient's wounds as fast as possible, before the effects of shock become disastrous. This explained why trauma death rates were so much lower for soldiers in Korea and Vietnam than for civilians back in the States.

Cowley had a vision of MASH-like trauma care for everyone in the state of Maryland. During the sixties he transformed his lab into one of the nation's first trauma centers, with its own blood bank, lab, operating room, and a crew of surgeons and support staff ready to operate 24 hours a day. He even got the Department of Transportation (DOT) to buy a squadron of helicopters, which he shared with the state police, some of whom he trained as paramedics. The helicopters could scoop up seriously injured individuals anywhere in the state and transport them to Cowley's operating table with remarkable speed. Cowley understood that to make such advanced care economically feasible, a trauma center had to have a minimum number of patients—a far larger number than the average hospital received. A steady stream of cases was also necessary to keep the staff's skills sharp.

But getting enough patients meant dispatching choppers and ambulances into zones traditionally covered by other hospitals. Cowley saw this as good medical practice; unfortunately, other

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Maryland doctors saw it as patient stealing. They spread a story among local ambulance personnel, most of whom were volunteer firemen, that Cowley wanted to replace them with his paramedic-policemen. Fierce territorial battles ensued. On one occasion, a state trooper found himself holding off a local ambulance crew at gunpoint while other troopers loaded a seriously injured patient into a helicopter.

Such clashes poisoned the political atmosphere and ruined for years Cowley's chances of realizing his dream of statewide trauma care. Throughout the late sixties, he battled just to keep the doors of his trauma center open. Nevertheless, his work attracted young surgical students who became his disciples and carried his ideas with them to other hospitals. One of these was David Boyd. Under Cowley, Boyd learned not only the medical aspects of trauma reform, but the political realities that work against it. When he left Maryland to finish his residency at another pioneering trauma center at Chicago's Cook County Hospital, he took with him Cowley's dream and a good idea of the political tools he'd need to achieve it.

Guns and money

Boyd didn't wait too long to begin his crusade. While digging bullets out of the bellies of people in the "knife and gun club" neighborhoods on Chicago's west side, the young surgeon saw an opportunity and seized it. During a political fight over staff cutbacks at his tax-supported hospital, Boyd managed to buttonhole the then-governor of Illinois, Richard Ogilvie. Boyd was lucky to find a willing listener. Ogilvie was not only a Republican like Boyd but a World War II veteran whose life had been saved by Army surgeons. Boyd's ideas made sense to the governor and he liked the young surgeon's aggressive style. He soon brought Boyd into his administration, diverted some DOT traffic safety dollars his way, and gave him a carte blanche to put together a statewide trauma system. Boyd's bureaucratic education was about to begin.

He was a quick study. Soon after taking the job, Boyd learned a valuable political lesson that few politicians seem to grasp: that sacrifice and commitment to a good idea can move people. During a routine budget battle in Springfield, a powerful state senator cut Boyd's entire budget. After pursuing the senator for days, Boyd finally cornered him in a restaurant, introduced himself as "Doctor" Boyd, and launched into a desperate lobbying effort. The senator, Boyd recalls, was impressed that Boyd had given up a surgeon's salary to become a state health bureaucrat. "He asked me what I made a year," Boyd says. "When I told him he said, 'You must really want this project bad.' I said I did. He said, 'Shit, man, you got it,' and I was back in business." Selfmockingly, Boyd calls this the lesson of "Playing Jesus Christ."

Boyd's obvious commitment helped him rally support among the non-medical people involved in emergency care—firemen, policemen, and volunteers. Throughout the state he set up training seminars to teach them basic emergency medical techniques they could use in the field. "The prehospital people—and there were thousands of these people who were volunteers—were hungry for it," says Dr. Rhodes. "They didn't understand his big words, but they knew someone was paying attention to things that had been happening on the streets for a long time." The thousands who went through these seminars lent Boyd's program the kind of participatory enthusiasm that any campaign—political or otherwise—needs.

Gaining support from the medical community was far more difficult. Many Illinois physicians personally disliked Boyd for papers he had published in medical journals charging, in essence, that physicians' ignorance of trauma medicine was killing people. Boyd's solution—diverting the seriously injured away from conventional ERs and to a few designated trauma centers—angered them even more. Many ER physicians feared a loss of business and prestige if their hospitals weren't chosen as trauma centers. Many surgeons feared the opposite: if their hospitals were chosen, they'd have to give up weekend golf games and nights of sleep in order to keep the trauma centers ready 24 hours a day.

The physicians had plenty of power to obstruct changes they didn't like. Their "disinterested" and "expert" views on medically oriented political matters carried great weight with politicians, the press, and the public. Their jargon-filled objections could kill trauma reform proposals outright or send them through an endless maze of government committees and study groups.

The only effective counterattack, Boyd knew, was to get other physicians to speak out in favor of trauma reform. So Boyd toured the state, evangelizing about trauma centers and trying to gain physician-converts. It was slow going. Dr. John Otten, then chief of surgery at Peoria's St. Francis Hospital, recalls he became furious when Boyd spoke to a group of that city's medical providers. " 'By God,' I thought, 'I've been in practice, I've had good training, we don't need some

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Boyd's workshops weren't bland information seminars; they were more like revival meetings. He gave fire and brimstone speeches about how poor training, worn out ideas, and lack of coordination were killing people. His solutions—radio communications, training, trauma centers—comprised the gospel.

resident from Chicago to tell us how to do it.' And I stood up and told him so." On his way home from the meeting, Otten says he started thinking about what Boyd was saying. The next day, he called Boyd and asked how he could help. Soon, Otten was the EMS "medical adviser" to the Peoria area—an unpaid, time-consuming position—and his hospital, St. Francis, was the area's designated trauma center.

Otten and others like him—established surgeons, usually Republicans with unassailable reputations and memberships at the right country clubs—became Boyd's agents, his subversives. When they attacked physicians who opposed trauma reform in front of county councils and at meetings of local medical societies, people listened. "I never got anywhere," says Boyd, "if I didn't have a local, credible surgeon in there, with blood on his shoes, to blow away the smoke, to stand up in front of everybody and say 'that's bullshit.' "

Boyd put his network of agents to good use. From 1970 to 1974 he built his trauma network through a combination of behind-the-scenes politicking and publicity mongering. His DOT money went for innovations newspapers loved: new ambulances, radios to link them with hospitals, computers to monitor trauma center performance, and helicopters to transport patients from rural hospitals to trauma centers in the larger towns and cities. Most important, he picked trauma centers, and with the cooperation of the prehospital people, arranged for the seriously injured to be sent to them. By 1974, his coordinated statewide trauma system was up and running. And it worked. Traffic deaths in the Springfield area dropped by 30 percent. In the Peoria area, around Dr. Otten's trauma center, such deaths dropped by 50 percent.

Salad days

Boyd's innovations in trauma care were paralleled elsewhere in the country by advances in care for other problems: cardiac arrest, burns, poisonings, problem pregnancies, and so on. No reformers, however, had devised a system capable of handling all these at once. The expert consensus was that the only way to organize such a comprehensive system was on a regional basis, with neighboring municipalities pooling their resources. And the only way to get such an effort started, Boyd and other reformers realized, was with federal support.

The opportunity finally came after much lobbying and several pilot projects. In 1974, President Nixon signed a bill establishing the new EMS office in HEW to spread the gospel of "regional EMS systems" around the country. To run the program, he chose Boyd.

From Springfield to Washington—it was a great American success story. But after moving to Washington, Boyd realized that not only would he have to cover a good deal more territory, he'd also have to play by a different set of rules. Fearing the program would be too much of an intervention in state and municipal affairs, the Nixon administration circumscribed Boyd's power. He could no longer run around designating trauma centers at will. Boyd could only provide "assistance and encouragement," in the form of federal dollars to health department bureaucrats, who were to push reforms themselves. In Illinois, Boyd had built his system by fiat; as a federal bureaucrat, he was supposed to act more like a midwife.

It was a fine Republican idea to limit the power of the division, but it ignored the fact that state health bureaucracies weren't peopled with David Boyds. The average health bureaucrat was a more mild-mannered sort; eager, certainly, for federal money, but terrified of risking his job by pushing reforms that powerful medical interests opposed. "Health officers like to *regulate* and *maintain* and *study*," says Boyd. Instead of joining the cause, health officers were "more comfortable monitoring bacteria levels in restaurant salad dressing."

The federal officals at HEW assigned to serve as Boyd's regional representatives were similarly worthless. "He got a few good ones and some

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real turkeys," recalls an official who had to work under them. "These guys were all former venereal disease investigators. . .one of them was a hopeless drunk, others were lazy, one was a pathological liar. It was a really bizarre group. So that's the kind of resources Dave had when he came to Washington. The only way he could get rid of them was if they retired."

Knowing he couldn't trust his subordinates, Boyd devised many clever ways of circumventing them. One was to leave Washington almost as soon as he arrived. For months, Boyd jetted around the country, dropping in on state and local health bureaucrats to meet them face to face and offer them federal grants. This gave Boyd a chance to identify local schemers as well. He recalls a dinner meeting at which he asked a group of local health planners roughly how much their EMS feasibility studies would cost. He was taken aback when one of them quoted an exact figure. "It's no mystery why," said the planner, obviously misjudging Boyd. "That figure is next year's operating budget for my department." Boyd made sure the planner never saw a cent of his federal funds.

Frustrating the greedy was one way Boyd kept his program from turning into another federal failure; another was not burying his vision in piles of undecipherable regulations. Rather than write some kind of "EMS manual," Boyd, with a team of experts in tow, presented his ideas orally at "EMS workshops" around the country. If, at the end of the workshop, the bureaucrats and medical providers in attendance still didn't understand exactly what a trauma center was, Boyd would buy them tickets to Peoria to tour Dr. Otten's facilities. "It was beautiful," recalls James Page, who was one of Boyd's frequent guest speakers. "A junket? It was unheard of. What you're supposed to do is put together volumes of dry technical material that no one can read."

These workshops weren't bland information seminars; they were more like revival meetings. Boyd gave fire and brimstone speeches about how poor training, worn out ideas, and a lack of coordination were killing people. His solutions —radio communications, training, trauma centers—comprised the gospel. Simply gathering in one room bureaucrats, hospitals administrators, physicians, nurses, and firemen from all the neighboring municipalities was a small revolution in itself. These people, most of whom probably had never met, suddenly were told they were members of the same EMS community and that federal money wouldn't magically transform emergency care without a considerable amount of voluntary effort on their part.

Boyd's challenge frequently worked. Voluntary effort, especially from the prehospital people, fueled the EMS program. Boyd formalized their participation by making sure prehospital professionals, not just doctors and hospital administrators, had seats on policy-making "EMS advisory councils." Those prehospital representatives often brought associates with them. "If some hospital administrator, or whoever, stood up at a local EMS council meeting and tried to stop [a reform]," explains Michael Rhodes, "there would be 16 ambulance volunteers standing up, telling him why it was the other way."

Boyd's cleverest end run around the establishment also involved tapping voluntary effort, this time from physicians. It was really a variation on what he had done in Illinois. He required that to be eligible for federal grant money, the health department had to find a local physician, preferably a surgeon, to volunteer his time as the department's "EMS medical adviser." It was to these physicians that he preached the most—often over drinks at some local tavern during his numerous trips into the field. The more committed to reform they became, the more Boyd delegated to them—and not to the bureaucrats—the responsibility for the project. These physician-operatives became known in the trade as "Boyd's mafia." The best of them Boyd promoted to federal posts as "regional advisers," supplanting the regulars from HEW.

Getting physicians involved wasn't just a matter of political expediency; it was essential to saving lives. What had kept emergency care so primitive was an almost total lack of communication between doctors in the ERs and ambulance people in the field. Boyd's program, for the first time, integrated the two. His medical advisers established radio hookups between hospitals and ambulances, trained ambulance crews, designed their procedures, and reviewed their cases. By convincing doctors to look over the shoulders of ambulance and paramedic crews, Boyd and his cohorts integrated prehospital care into the physicians' sphere of activity. This made for both better on-site care and a new spirit of cooperation among the various parties involved in treating the sick and the hurt.

Boyd spent the early years of his program setting all this in motion. After 1976, he began concentrating on what had always been his ultimate goal: creating a system of trauma centers for the entire nation. The word went out to his operatives to start pushing their EMS departments to designate trauma centers and implement "triage pro-

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In Pennsylvania, hospitals slowed the designation process with a lawsuit charging that Boyd's trauma center concept, by diverting patients to government-selected hospitals, resulted in "restraint of trade."

tocols"—the rules instructing ambulances to take seriously injured patients directly to trauma centers, even if it meant bypassing normal ERs closer to the scene of the injury.

Tuning in

But great changes were underway in American medicine that would make the designation of trauma centers and the adoption of protocols more and more difficult. The trend toward increasing utilization of the emergency room continued, and, if anything, the pace of change quickened because of Boyd's medical army. Through their efforts, more seriously sick and injured patients were being kept alive long enough to get them to hospital ERs. ER doctors thus had to improve their critical care skills to cope with the additional cases they were receiving. New procedures were developed, and Boyd was instrumental here as well. Millions of dollars from his program went to the nation's medical schools for courses in emergency medicine. Better skills brought greater credibility. And prestige inevitably brought with it a greater sense of group consciousness for the ER physicians. They saw themselves as having common, well-defined interests. The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), which had only been founded in 1968, won official recognition in 1979 from the American Board of Medical Specialties, giving it the hallmark of respectability.

A new consciousness of the economics of emergency care also arose. Hospital administrators finally realized the importance of the ER. They spent huge sums throughout the seventies on new medical devices and hired more ER physicians to use them. The ER came to be considered a prime source of revenue. Hospitals competed, each trying to outdo the other in the lavishness of its ER. "We stopped calling them 'rooms,' " says one ER physician. "They became emergency *departments*. The ER was no longer 'the pit' but the hospital's 'window to the community.' "

Predictably, hospital administrators and ER physicians didn't want anyone, especially government, meddling with their new source of income. They weren't about to sit back and watch as ambulances carrying seriously injured and potentially lucrative patients bypassed their hospitals for the trauma center down the street. The possible loss of revenue was bad enough; the public relations damage would be intolerable. The average patient, they believed, would surely prefer to take his non-emergency problems to a hospital with a trauma center than to one without. So if the trauma center idea couldn't be stopped outright, they decided, it had to be modified so that every hospital that wished to could be designated as a trauma center. Otherwise, they feared, the economic results could be dire.

But Boyd knew that too many trauma centers was almost as senseless as none at all. Without the volume of patients that comes with centralization, no hospital could afford to keep surgeons, staff, and operating rooms ready 24 hours a day. The temptation to cut corners on care would be overwhelming. Without patient volume, too, surgeons and operating crews couldn't keep their skills honed. The result would be second-rate care at all hospitals. Boyd let regional EMS bureaucrats know that if they compromised like this with their hospitals and with the public's health, they could forget about federal EMS funds.

This, of course, infuriated ER doctors and hospital administrators. Soon, lawyers and lobbyists for ACEP and the hospital associations were swarming around Washington and state capitals in an attempt to override Boyd's authority. In Pennsylvania, for instance, hospitals slowed the designation process with a lawsuit charging that Boyd's trauma system concept, by diverting patients to government-selected hospitals, resulted in "restraint of trade." The charge didn't hold up in court. But lobbyists picked up where the lawyers left off. This pressure—from doctors and hospitals—backed up with massive PAC contributions, killed pro-trauma center efforts in the Pennsylvania legislature.

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Boyd was able to pull off a few victories where his agents commanded enough power. While the rest of Pennsylvania languished, Dr. Michael Rhodes developed an exemplary system in the Allentown region that cut preventable death rates by 33 percent. R.A. Cowley used Boyd's grant money to build Maryland's into possibly the best statewide system in the country. EMS reformers in Orange County, California battled lawyers and lobbyists from ACEP and the Hospital Council of Southern California for almost two years before they could install a trauma system. Once in place, Orange County's system cut the preventable death rate for non-head-injured auto accident victims from 73 percent to 9 percent. For every Orange County, though, there were a dozen communities where officials either lost the battle outright or buckled under the pressure and sent trauma proposals back for further "study."

The final blow to the movement came in 1981, when the Reagan administration folded Boyd's EMS funding into block grants paid directly to the states, no strings attached. This has slowed the trauma care movement considerably. Instead of going to regional EMS offices, federal money now goes to state health departments, where the bureaucrats are free to spend it on less controversial projects. "Instead of funding EMS," explains Dr. Mark Vasu of the way things now work in his home state of Michigan, "they make the decision to get rid of rats in Detroit." As Michigan went, so went the nation. A 1984 GAO report found that funding for EMS dropped after 1981 in ten out of eleven states surveyed.

With Boyd out of government, the money available for EMS no longer comes with his strict standards. EMS bureaucrats have rid themselves of their troublesome medical advisers—Boyd's network has disintegrated. Without these hard-driving physicians, the bureaucrats are once more prone to make the kind of compromises they never got away with under the Boyd regime. In states such as Florida, Pennsylvania, and even Illinois, "trauma centers" have popped up like so many pizza parlors.

Exile

Today Boyd advises states and municipalities on EMS issues, and he is well aware of what is afoot in emergency medicine. The picture he has of the state of the reform movement he created is a pessimistic one. "There's progress in some places," he says, slapping his hand down hard on his desk, "but man, it is goddamned imperceptible."

Boyd has ample reason for his pessimism. Studies suggest that between 10,000 and 20,000 Americans still die every year of serious but treatable injuries because a nationwide trauma system isn't in place.

That hospitals and doctors resist change out of a fear of losing money and prestige is obscene. What's more, even their fear of lost business is probably unjustified. Boyd and other reformers have insisted for years that seriously injured patients are only a small fraction of trauma patients—about 5 percent. Diverting these patients to specialized trauma centers, they claim, would be an insignificant sacrifice of revenue for non-trauma centers, especially considering the lives that would be saved. Concern about a public relations debacle, Boyd believes, is equally unfounded. A recent study of the economic impact of Orange County's trauma system suggests Boyd is right on both counts. The study found no significant drop in admissions in those Orange County ERs that were not designated trauma centers.

David Boyd's quest for emergency medical reform was abruptly foreshortened by the Reagan administration. Yet, while the current state of affairs is distressing, the story of Boyd and his program is not without a hopeful lesson. That is, in short, government does have a proper role in our lives. Without the power of position and money that Boyd wielded as a federal bureaucrat, it is hard to imagine where emergency care would be today—and how many more preventable deaths would have occurred. Are there many better instances of government promoting the general good over that of narrow interests? And Boyd himself showed that passion and a good idea can go a long way toward overcoming the seemingly intractable problems of bureaucracy and greed. The federal EMS program should have become a model for all kinds of other federal initiatives. But for the moment, it's been largely forgotten.

Trauma reform is too good an idea to disappear altogether. Currently, in offices scattered around Washington, a few committed officials are plotting the movement's comeback. They have plenty of ideas: proposals for trauma research money, new national trauma care standards for hospitals, and legislation to enforce those standards. Of course, the lobbies aren't going to sit back and let all this happen. To defeat the doctors and hospitals will require a massive effort by the government, and then only with a shrewd maverick bureaucrat leading the offensive. Someone should see if David Boyd is available. ■

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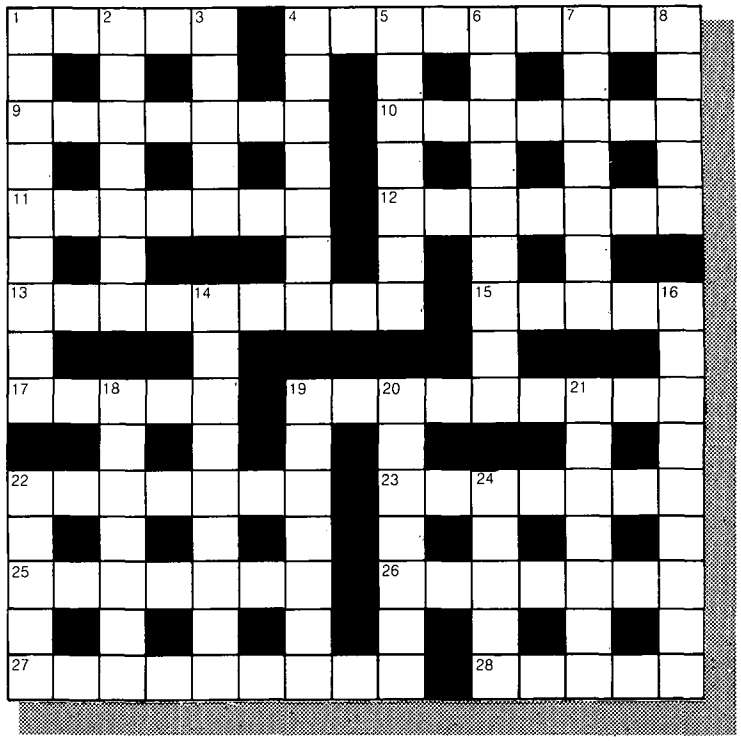
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



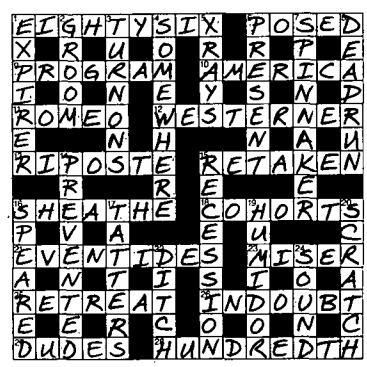
ACROSS

1. Fast way out of Nepal revolution. (5)
4. With G-K, Inca spell trouble in the air. (9)
9. Fixed Latin two first. (7)
10. Musical works are in season at Ascot. (7)
11. Angrily cry about unfortunate loss. (7)
12. Earlier wines leave the country? (7)
13. Game birds gather poor farmers around end of month. (9)
15. Paying guest heard story. (5)
17. See American symbol lag badly at ease. (5)
19. Strange mishaps or pithy comments. (9)
22. Stereo feature for head of the house? (7)
23. Inarticulate Londoner reported mother's wound? (7)
25. Tony Roman leads on into a mess. (7)
26. Checks one sinner carefully. (5, 2)
27. Mr. Orr involved in 4 Across, for example. (9)
28. Organized Basra natives. (5)

DOWN

1. Charles hides split lip for ethical consideration. (9)
2. Crazy dope is a kind of fat. (7)
3. Bad lives lead to bad things. (5)
4. Why 150 swallowed by Noah come up happy. (7)
5. Clowns throw taunts around saint. (7)
6. Set Ron's price for plotter. (9)
7. Waiting period in scattered *termini*. (7)
8. Sulfur in holes is heavy breathing. (5)
14. Stir nine oaks in tea to enter without paying. (5, 4)
16. Rents inside population. (9)
18. Express a regret more. (7)
19. Rio pair developed form of reasoning. (1, 6)
20. Monotonous percussion instrument for bees? (7)
21. Crooked aisle is Prussian territory. (7)
22. Quick itch? (5)
24. Disturbed Mia or Fate. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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The real story behind that Soviet combat brigade in Cuba

The STUPIDITY of 'Intelligence'

by Stansfield Turner

"The most profound disappointment of my presidency," Jimmy Carter said of the failure to secure Senate ratification of the SALT II agreement. He had staked his presidential prestige and, to a significant extent, his political future on the signing and ratification of the treaty. While many factors combined to put Senate ratification in doubt, the White House thought the prospects hopeful even in an election year; hopeful that is, until an intelligence failure concerning the report of a brigade of Soviet troops in Cuba caused a political uproar that seriously damaged the chances for passage of SALT II. Here, Stansfield Turner, director of the CIA at the time, gives his account of the mishandling of the report and the unnecessary damage it caused.

Technology has so increased the amount of information we can acquire that a whole new set of problems has resulted. On the one hand, analysts are inundated with data and must find ways to filter, store, and retrieve what is significant. On the other hand, analysts must be concerned with whether they are receiving everything that is collected in their area of interest; with whether the members of the intelligence community—the CIA's espionage branch, the NSA [National Security Agency], the Defense organizations responsible for overhead reconnaissance, the CIA's electronic surveillance component, the State Department's diplomatic reporting system, the FBI's foreign intelligence branch, the Defense Intelligence Agency's [DIA] attaches, the intelligence organizations of the military services, and the intelligence offices of the departments of Treasury, Energy, and the Drug Enforcement Agency—all share what they collect. An unfortunate example of information not being shared adequately came in the summer of 1979. It led to the most serious intelligence failure of my tenure. The failure to forecast the fall of the Shah earlier that year was of far less significance than our mishandling of the report that a "combat brigade" of Soviet troops was in Cuba. Had we predicted the Shah's fall from power even six or seven months ahead of time, there was little the United States could have done to prevent it. The reporting on the combat brigade, however, did play a direct part in scuttling the SALT II arms control treaty with the Soviet Union.

In June 1979 President Carter had met with President Brezhnev and signed the SALT II treaty. The Senate was preparing to hold its initial hearings on ratification when, on July 18, the *Washington Star* reported, "Sen. Richard Stone,

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The CIA and the NSA had in their files reports going back to the late 1960s that used the term "brigade" in connection with Soviet activities in Cuba. These, too, had been forgotten.

D-Fla., yesterday said Soviet combat troops may be in Cuba in violation of the agreement that ended the Cuban missile crisis in 1962." The obvious implication was that if the Soviets could not be trusted to abide by an old agreement, the Senate should not ratify a new one with them. While SALT II was stalled over this issue, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, in December 1979, and the treaty was scuttled. If the leak had been the truth, its effect on the treaty might have been justifiable. But it was not. The chain of events it triggered was unfortunate.

That chain actually began in the spring of 1979, when National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski directed a review of all intelligence on Soviet military activities in Cuba. He was concerned about increasing Soviet and Cuban activities in Central America. In response, I told the intelligence community to review files for information that may have been overlooked. In early July the NSA came up with something old but new. What was old was a conclusion buried in its files that the Soviets in Cuba had a unit designated a "brigade." What was new was that this conclusion had never been shared with the rest of the intelligence community. Some of the clues the NSA used to reach this conclusion came from its own signals intelligence, some from photo and espionage information given it by other agencies.

The United States was well aware that the Soviets had a sizable training mission assisting the Cuban military. What the new White House-directed search did was remind the NSA that one unit in that training mission was referred to by the Soviets as a brigade. On the grounds that the term "brigade" is normally associated with combat units, rather than with training, the NSA jumped to the conclusion that the unit had a combat function. That was the inference from a sparse fact or two. To emphasize its conclusion, it coined the term "combat brigade" to identify the unit as what it thought it was.

Next, the NSA published the conclusion as part of its daily distribution of new, raw intelligence data. When readers saw the designation "combat," they imagined a unit preparing to move out of Cuba and go to war in Central America. We were already worried about Nicaragua, whose government was on the verge of collapse. Because intelligence had never reported a Soviet combat unit in Cuba, people assumed that the brigade had just arrived. It looked like a threatening move made by the Soviets just after they had signed a treaty with us.

The NSA report was hardly out before it found its way to Senator Stone. This was a deliberate leak by someone in the Executive Branch; the report had not been distributed to the Congress. Stone, with a large constituency of anti-Castro Cuban refugees, had reason to stay alert to developments in Cuba. He also had a constituency of conservative Floridians who disliked his having voted for the Panama Canal Treaty in 1978. To placate both constituencies as he faced an uphill battle for reelection in 1980 (a battle that he lost), he needed an opportunity to demonstrate that he could be tough on the Soviets and the Cubans.

On the morning of July 17, at a public hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Stone alluded to the fact that he had intelligence on a previously undisclosed Soviet military presence in Cuba. Later that day in a secret hearing he pressed Defense Secretary Harold Brown, myself, and several others for more details. Brown stated that "there is no evidence of any increase in the size of the Soviet military presence in Cuba over the past several years." I agreed with that. Brown went on, though, to assert that "intelligence does not warrant the conclusion that there are any other significant Soviet military forces in Cuba" besides a training group. This went a good bit further than I thought warranted, in view of the NSA's categoric assertion that there were Soviet combat forces in Cuba. The rest of the intelligence community, though, had just begun to check on the NSA's opinion.

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In the meantime, the quotation appeared in the *Washington Star*, clearly leaked from the secret hearing. ABC's Ted Koppel covered the story a day later; John Scali on the same network discussed it a few days after that. Fortunately, it was not picked up anywhere else and faded from public attention. That gave us in the intelligence community some breathing space. We were glad to have that, because we not only were reviewing files but had new intelligence that the brigade was going to participate in a special field exercise in early August, just a few weeks away. If we could watch that exercise, we might learn something new and more conclusive. We, of course, did just that. What we learned was that this unit was doing field training on its own, not simply training Cubans. That was a possible indication that it was preparing for combat. If this kind of training had taken place before, we had not detected it. A few days after the exercise, the CIA published an independent evaluation saying that the unit was indeed a combat brigade.

The CIA's confirmation threw the administration into as much panic as can be generated in Washington in mid-August, when most officials are away on vacation. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, still on holiday, immediately recognized that when the word got out, the SALT treaty would be in trouble. He was right. The CIA's report was published in the widely distributed *National Intelligence Daily* (NID). Because the subject was sensitive, the CIA took the unusual step of checking with the staff of the National Security Council before publishing. Approval was given. On August 29, less than a week after the item appeared in the NID, Clarence Robinson, a writer for *Aviation Week* magazine, phoned Richard Baker, on the staff of David D. Newsom, the under secretary of state, for confirmation of a story he had heard about a new Soviet military unit in Cuba. It was clear that he had a copy of the item from the NID. Baker told Robinson that the State Department had no comment.

Newsom immediately contacted Vance for permission to notify key members of Congress that the story was bound to come out soon. Congress was in recess, and the lawmakers, some of them overseas, had to be reached by phone. Newsom urged each one not to let the story get blown out of proportion. All of them took the news as a matter of course except Senator Frank Church of Idaho (who had been chairman of the Senate committee that had investigated allegations of intelligence abuses). Church was rather more liberal than his Idaho constituents. Like Stone, he was facing a tough battle for reelection in 1980 (which he also lost). He too was looking for ways to show that he could be more firm with the Soviets than most of the people of Idaho thought he was. He immediately saw that going public with the information Newsom had given him was a good means for doing that. He asked Newsom if he could. Vance, who was resigned to the item's imminent release and knew he needed the support of Church, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, to get the SALT II treaty approved, acquiesced. Church called a press conference. *Aviation Week* had gone to press before

Keeping Secrets

The NSA [National Security Agency], with its military orientation, also collaborates with the military services to keep the CIA out of the analysis of major military issues. For instance, on joining the CIA I quickly recognized that our agency was not up-to-date on the latest developments about some very secret aspects of the Soviet Navy. I went to the secretary of the Navy, Graham Claytor, and explained the benefit to the Navy of having a second opinion on what was happening with the Soviet Navy. Graham immediately agreed to try to get the Navy to release more data to the CIA. Over a period of years, the two of us were able to open the door only a small crack. Many of the needed data were collected by Navy ships and aircraft, not by intelligence elements under the control of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). The material collected was therefore technically outside the DCI's jurisdiction. Some of it, though, was electronic intercept material processed by the NSA for the Navy. I directed Vice Admiral Bobby Inman, director of the NSA to share that information with the CIA. He said he could not, because the Navy contended that it was tactical, not national, intelligence. The Navy had placed it in a special code word compartment to which the CIA did not have access. This, of course, was a bureaucratic ruse, and the loser was the United States.

S. T.

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If the leak had been the truth, its effect on the SALT II treaty might have been justifiable. But it was not. The chain of events it triggered was unfortunate.

Church's press release but, ironically, did not run the story. The editors apparently did not feel they had sufficient confirmation to print it. Thus, the administration had more time to deal with the problem than it realized. Vance could have restrained Church for a little while anyway.

Instead, Church at once took the position that the Senate should postpone debate on SALT II until the Soviets withdrew the brigade. More than a month was consumed in the attempt to work out some arrangement with the Soviets that would satisfy the Senate. The Soviets were not flexible. On October 2, unmoved by a major presidential speech on the subject the night before, the Senate voted to postpone consideration of ratifying SALT II until the president assured them that Soviet troops in Cuba were not engaged in a combat role. On December 25 the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and all consideration of ratifying SALT II ceased. Whether the Senate would have ratified it if there had not been the delay over the combat brigade, we can only speculate.

The unnecessary panic in the White House and State Department about notifying Congress and mollifying Senator Church was harmful. The issue became hot before they were ready to handle it. It turned out that in 1963 the Kennedy administration had agreed to a Soviet brigade's remaining in the location where we identified the combat brigade in 1979. The White House and State Department had lost track of that. With some research into this history, State should have been able to present the intelligence to the Congress and the public in a less alarming light. The CIA and the NSA had in their files reports going back to the late 1960s that used the term "brigade" in connection with Soviet activities in Cuba. These too had been forgotten. As a piece or two of this information emerged at the NSA, it was not illogical to conclude that the brigade had a combat function, especially after it was seen doing independent, combat-type training. That, however, was not the only possible conclusion that could have been drawn. It could have been a unit that provided an opportunity for the several thousand Soviet soldiers in Cuba to get occasional refresher courses in basic soldiering skills, such as driving tanks or firing artillery. Or the brigade could have been preparing to put on a demonstration for the Cubans. Our playing up this combat training exercise as something new was misleading. It was new to us, but such exercises might have been going on unnoticed. After all, we detected the one in August only because we had begun paying special attention to the brigade and because the intelligence community's collection effort had been particularly well coordinated in predicting and tracking the exercise.

The NSA bears most of the blame in the case of the Soviet brigade, but the rest of the intelligence community did not respond well once the NSA's report was out. Professional jealousy was at work. The NSA had got a scoop. The CIA and the others feigned a lack of interest in the report until it became obvious that it was too significant to ignore. That, I believe, is the only explanation for the CIA's dragging its feet in searching its files and discovering that it knew there had been a brigade in Cuba for a long time. Most of all, though, everyone became defensive.

In part this was because analysts dug in their heels at what they perceived as pressure from policy-makers to play down the significance of the brigade. In part it was reluctance to admit error and weaken the community's credibility in outsiders' eyes.

Why did the intelligence community present an incomplete picture of the brigade? The fundamental mistake was in NSA's doing its own analysis. The next was in publishing it. The NSA is mandated to collect intelligence, not to analyze it. It must do enough analysis about what it has

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collected to decide what it should collect next. In intelligence jargon this level of analysis is termed "processing." Processing is regularly stretched by the NSA into full-scale analysis. In this instance, the abuse of processing was flagrant. The NSA's first report on the brigade was based on old information that had previously been processed. Having rediscovered it, the NSA had the responsibility to turn it over to the analysts at the CIA, the DIA, and State for evaluation. This is not purely a matter of bureaucratic turf. Although the NSA has excellent analysts to do its processing, it does not have the range of analytic talent needed for responsible analysis, nor all of the relevant data from the other collecting agencies needed for a comprehensive job. The NSA's analysis is bound to be biased in the direction of what signals intercepts tell and is less likely to take account of photographic or human intelligence. The NSA and other collecting agencies also do not have the consistent contact with policy-makers that the analytic agencies do. In this case, it meant that the NSA was not sensitive to how the policy-makers would interpret the term "combat."

A dangerous side effect of the NSA's regular transgression from processing into analysis is that it leads to deliberate withholding of raw information from the true analytic agencies. The NSA wants to get credit for the scoop. Even when the NSA does release information promptly, it is frequently so digested that other analysts can't use it. The NSA excuses these practices by saying that it must protect its methods of collecting data. It is true that the NSA's collection techniques must be carefully protected and therefore that the information it gathers must be handled very carefully. If, for instance, a report of a particular telephone conversation ever got back to the two people who had it, they might conclude that their phones were tapped or that one of them was a traitor. On the other hand, if the NSA's report of that conversation was too sterile, analysts would not give it much credence. There is a fine line to be drawn here, but there is no question in my mind that the NSA regularly and deliberately draws that line to make itself look good rather than to protect secrets. Somehow the point does not get through at the NSA, any more than it does at the CIA's espionage branch, that it hurts the overall intelligence effort if a collecting agency does not properly share its information. And when it delays sharing until it can give the information directly to the decision-makers, we run into the kind of problem we've seen with the Soviet brigade. ■

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for November 1985 is presented to

Peter T. Kilborn
The New York Times

Kilborn provides a comprehensive overview of how six men, led by Treasury Secretary James Baker, have taken firm control of the government's economic policy-making machinery. By consolidating eight policy-making bodies into the Economic Policy Council, which meets twice weekly at the White House, Baker and Donald Regan have set up a mechanism for the development of policies on issues such as the strength of the dollar, trade, and the budget deficit. Kilborn shows that, as a result of the reorganization and Baker's pragmatic approach, power has shifted from cabinet departments such as Commerce and Agriculture toward Baker, Regan, Regan's aide Alfred Kingon, Secretary of State George Shultz, Deputy Treasury Secretary Richard Darman, and Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker. Kilborn thereby reveals a development that has gone virtually unnoticed but which may prove to be one of the most important of the second Reagan term.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for stories published or aired in January will be announced in the April issue. Nominations will close February 15. Nominations should be accompanied by two copies of the story or stories.

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SCENES FROM AN INVASION

How the U.S. military stumbled to victory in Grenada

★ ★ ★

by Richard Gabriel

In the young histories of how America came to stand tall again, the October 24, 1983 invasion of Grenada has been cited as the major expression of the nation's renewed ability to assert itself abroad. With American citizens on the island in trouble, the government executed a lightning-fast strike to rescue them, vanquished the enemy, and in one swoop restored confidence in the military's capacity to protect our national interests. That, at least, was the perception. The reality was altogether different. In his book, Military Incompetence, *Richard Gabriel shows that rather than demonstrating strength, the invasion gave stunning proof of weakness and ineptitude.*

Counting both the special operations and regular forces, the U.S. deployed about 7,000 soldiers for the operation. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had estimated the opposition would be 700 to 1,000 Cuban soldiers, 1,500 Grenadian army soldiers, and another 2,000 to 5,000 Grenadian trained militia. Actually, they found only 50 Cuban soldiers and some Cuban construction workers with limited military training. The territorial militia was essentially unarmed and a significant part of the Grenadian army would not fight for their new government. In the final count, the U.S. outnumbered the opposition in combat forces ten to one. Gabriel, co-author of Crisis In Command, *one of the most influential books about the military in the last decade, reveals that despite the overwhelming superiority in numbers and technology, our armed forces repeatedly botched their tasks.*

What follows is an adaptation of Gabriel's discussion of the invasion of Grenada. Full supporting documentation can be found in the Notes *section of* Military Incompetence.

★ ★ ★

Shortly before midnight on Monday, October 24, a team of 35 or 40 men (the numbers remain classified) chuted up in their quarters in a building near the airport on the island of Barbados. Just before midnight, they boarded a C-130 transport, with its insignia painted out, for the 45-minute flight to Grenada. The men of Delta Force [the Army's special anti-terrorist unit] would parachute onto the island in the early morning darkness of Tuesday, October 25.

Their mission was to take up positions in a grassy ravine near some abandoned construction buildings at the far west end of the Point Salines airstrip. Although the specific details of the mission remain secret, it seems certain that it was a

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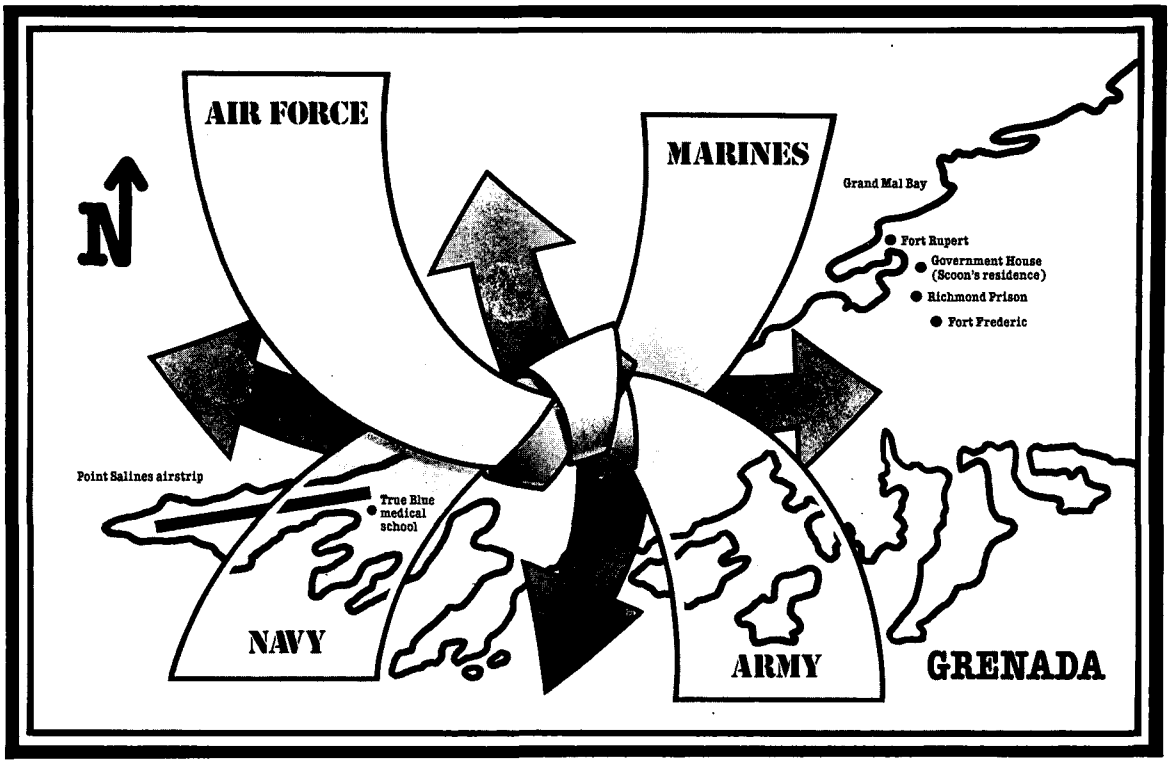

Tom Miller

twofold mission. The first objective was to determine the airstrip's usability for the Ranger force that was to land on it at dawn.

Sometime after 2 a.m. the Delta team was spotted by a member of the Cuban garrison. The alarm sounded and the Cuban garrison came to life and began to deploy around the ravine, only a half-mile from their barracks. Delta was quickly surrounded on three sides as the Cubans began to pour heavy small-arms fire into the ravine from the surrounding slopes. Some of the Delta Force found their way into a wooden building on the edge of the ravine, but Cuban fire poured through the walls. When Delta was finally rescued at dawn by the Ranger landing, 22 of its men had been killed or wounded, though the military has refused to acknowledge that there were any dead or wounded or even that Delta Force was on the island. Delta's failure to execute its mission alerted the defenders to the larger invasion. The alarm was sounded throughout the island almost four hours before the main forces arrived. When the Rangers parachuted onto the airstrip later that morning, the enemy was waiting for them with their AK-47s and ZSU-23 machine guns.

A second Delta mission launched in the early daylight hours of the first day was to assault Richmond Hill Prison and rescue the "political prisoners" being held there. Built on the remains of an old eighteenth-century fort, the prison cannot be approached by foot from three sides except through dense jungle growing on the steep mountainside; the fourth side is approachable by a narrow neck of road with high trees running along it. The prison offers no place for a helicopter assault force to land. Richmond Hill forms one side of a steep valley. Across and above the valley, on a higher peak, is another old fort, Fort Frederic, which housed a Grenadian garrison. From Fort Frederic, the garrison easily commanded the slopes and floor of the ravine below with small-arms and machine-gun fire. It was into this valley and under the guns of the Grenadian garrison that the helicopters of Delta Force flew at 6:30 that morning.

The helicopters of Task Force 160 flew into the valley and turned their noses toward the prison. Unable to land, the Delta raiders began to rappel down ropes dragging from the doors of the helicopters. Suddenly, as men swung wildly from the rappelling ropes, the helicopters were caught

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This article is adapted from chapter six of Military Incompetence: Why the American Military Doesn't Win *by Richard Gabriel.* *Copyright ©1985 by Richard Gabriel. Used by arrangement with Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

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★ ★ ★

The mental hospital was leveled, but neither the garrison's barracks nor the headquarters building very close to the fort was touched.

in a murderous cross-fire from the front as forces from the prison opened fire, and more devastatingly, from behind, as enemy forces in Fort Frederic rained heavy small-arms and machine-gun fire down from above. According to eyewitness accounts by Grenadian civilians who were in houses and in the mental hospital situated above the ravine, a number of helicopters that could, flew out of the valley. In at least one instance, a helicopter pilot turned back without orders and refused to fly into the assault. Charges of cowardice were filed against him by some members of the Delta Force but were later dropped.

★ ★ ★

Near Pearls airport, Seal teams [the Navy's commando units] also failed to accomplish their missions. Two four-man teams were dropped in the sea near the end of the Pearls runway. The Marines intended to conduct a heliborne assault against the airport and had to know the nature and strength of its defenses. Although the method of bringing them in remains classified, it seems likely that the Seal teams were LAPSEDed into the water. LAPSEing (low-altitude parachute extraction system) is a technique whereby men and equipment are pulled from the back of a low-flying C-130 aircraft by drogue parachute as the aircraft skims the water. It seems that one four-man Seal team deploying from the aircraft in its rubber whaleboat was knocked unconscious by the impact on the water. Thrown from the boat as it hit the water and weighed down with weapons and equipment, the men were dragged under and drowned.

The second team managed to hit the water safely, start the boat's engine, and proceed toward the beach. As they approached their landing point, a boat rounded a jut of land near them, in all probability, a civilian fishing boat. The Seals spotted the boat and shut down their engine, apparently flooding it. The engine was probably also swamped by a wave. When the Seals attempted to restart their engine they couldn't. The current began to drag them out to sea. Eleven hours later, they were picked up by a Navy ship.

The failure of the Seals to reconnoiter the proposed Marine landing zone almost caused a disaster. As the Marine helicopters approached the original landing zone—shown as an open field on their old maps—it turned out to be a grove of banana trees. The Marine pilots had to land on the exposed runway of Pearls airport. They were, however, unopposed, and within two hours of landing, the Marines deployed south and cut the main road at Grenville. Pearls airport had been secured.

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Meanwhile, another Seal team of 22 men had landed on the grounds of Governor General Scoon's residence with the mission of evacuating him by helicopter to the USS *Guam*. Unfortunately, the Seals were spotted inside the compound and quickly surrounded by a mixed force of Cubans and Grenadians. Most observers put the size of the enemy force at no larger than 50 men. A Cuban-manned BTR-60 armored personnel carrier was brought up near the gate, while other forces deployed to cut the one escape route from the estate, trapping the Seals and Governor Scoons. It was not until the following day that the Marine landing at Grand Mal Bay relieved the "siege" of the governor's house. Reporters, press accounts, and eyewitnesses suggest that as many as ten of the 22-man force were wounded. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) continue to maintain that no Seals were wounded in the operation.

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The first of the regular forces to arrive on Grenada were the Rangers. After the men were parachuted onto the island, the aircraft were to

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stop in Barbados, refuel, and return to Fort Stewart, where they would pick up the remaining Rangers. Because airlift was at a premium, a decision had to be made as to which of two Ranger battalions to deploy. In typical joint-operation planning, the decision was made to deploy neither at full strength. Rather, purely for political and bureaucratic reasons, elements of both battalions, together with their separate staffs, were assigned to the initial assault. Such a plan violated both simplicity and unity of command and created problems once the Rangers landed.

After the first Rangers parachuted onto the island, they came under unexpectedly heavy fire. There was considerable confusion since command of the Ranger force was split; there was no single commander for the force. Ranger radio transmissions began to "spike," that is, to greatly exaggerate, the firepower and strength of the enemy. These estimates from the ground forces were transmitted over the command net and reached the 18th Airborne Corps commander. Fearing that the 82nd would have to go into Grenada with more troops than expected to relieve the pressure on the Rangers and fearing that the available airlift would be insufficient, someone in higher headquarters decided to overrule the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) commander and ordered the C-130s en route to Fort Stewart to divert to Fort Bragg. The aircraft diverted as instructed, leaving two-thirds of the Ranger force sitting on the tarmac at Fort Stewart listening to the war on their radios.

Because of Delta's failure to clear the runway, and because Delta's presence had alerted the island's defenders to a possible follow-on assault, the Rangers could not land at Point Salines. But the aircraft were rigged for landing, not for a parachute assault. (A C-130 rigged for parachute assault holds about 64 men and their equipment; when equipped for landing, it accommodates about 80. The C-130s were all the more crowded as they also carried a number of OH-6 helicopters.) While en route to Grenada, the Rangers had to rig their aircraft for a parachute assault.

The parachute assault did not go well. Once over the drop zone, the pilots of the two lead aircraft refused to follow the orders of the jump master and veered off at the last minute to "avoid extremely heavy antiaircraft fire." However, the ground fire was only small-arms rifle and machine-gun fire. One explanation offered by the Pentagon spokesman was that the first aircraft had trouble with its navigating equipment. The enemy units that had Delta Force pinned down at the end of the runway began to fire at the incoming aircraft. Since the first two planes tracked away from the drop zone, the first Rangers to jump were from the third aircraft, which carried the command elements for the 2nd and 1st battalions. There were anxious minutes on the ground as the commanders discovered that they were alone, that the two planeloads of Rangers had not preceded them. The next load of Rangers did not arrive for seven minutes.

The Pentagon spokesman, Michael Burch, noted on "ABC Nightline" that it took *two hours* for all the Rangers to land on the island. This piecemeal deployment of the airborne force probably resulted from the different time it took each aircraft to rerig en route; it undoubtedly contributed to Ranger casualties and allowed the enemy to mount a more effective resistance. The Air Force pilots' refusal to make runs over the drop zone prompted some officers to consider pressing charges of cowardice against them. The Army "counseled" the officers out of pressing charges. A year later, the Army stated that such charges had been investigated and found groundless.

The Rangers floating to the ground had dropped onto the alerted Cuban defenders, who shot some in their parachutes both in the air and on the ground. Others landed in the water, which surrounds the airstrip on two sides. Cuban defensive positions were, in one case, as close as 400 yards to the drop zone. After about 20 minutes, as more troops hit the airstrip, the Rangers began their assault, thus relieving the pressure on the exhausted Delta Force. The Cubans gave ground easily; more than 150 Cuban engineers, workers, and soldiers surrendered. By 10 a.m. the Rangers declared the area safe and secure.

According to the Pentagon, a full brigade of the 82nd arrived at 2 p.m., almost five hours after the Rangers had declared the landing zone secure. Upon arriving, however, they came under what the Pentagon called "heavy fire." The Cuban barracks on the airfield had not been taken at all, and the Rangers controlled only one end of the airstrip and did not press the attack. Significantly, the True Blue medical school campus lies at the other end of the runway and apparently was still in Cuban hands by late afternoon of the first day. Just why the Rangers did not press the attack is unclear. But when they jumped, they had to leave much of their ammunition and heavy weapons behind. Although they cleared the west end of the runway (partly because the enemy withdrew), they were unable to attack and subdue the Cuban

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barracks less than a half mile away. They threw up a perimeter defense on their end of the runway and held on until reinforced by the 82nd.

The Rangers had reached the students at the True Blue campus by late afternoon on the first day of the invasion. But U.S. forces had not been briefed that there were two other groups of students on the island. One group of 224 students was at the Grand Anse campus about four miles north of the airstrip, and a second group of 202 was in a housing complex at Lance aux Epines; they were not rescued until two days later. Enemy forces were in control of both locations and could easily have killed the students. That U.S. forces did not know the location of all the students before launching a "rescue" was one of the main intelligence failures of the Grenada operation.

On Wednesday, October 26, a combined assault by Rangers, paratroopers, and Marine helicopters was launched against the Grand Anse campus to rescue the 224 students there. The Cubans and Grenadians had thrown up a thin and hasty line of defense facing the St. George's road and between the U.S. forces and the campus. According to the students themselves, they never felt in any danger until the Americans arrived and it looked as if there might be a battle. No threats were ever made against either the students or the medical school staff. Indeed, if the enemy had wanted to kill the students or hold them hostage, they had two full days to do so after the first American forces landed.

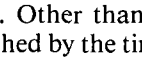
The paratroops assaulted from the ground, keeping the enemy occupied, while six Marine helicopters approached the campus from the undefended seaward side and landed behind the defenders. Once the assault began, the enemy broke and ran, without putting up a great deal of resistance, though a few stayed behind to snipe at the Americans. There were no Grenadian or Cuban prisoners or casualties.

However, the assault did not go quite as easily as the JCS report has it. As the Rangers were boarding the assault helicopters for the move to Grand Anse, the helicopters came under small-arms fire from the bush. From conversations with U.S. soldiers who witnessed the event it appears that the pilots may have panicked and lifted off with troops hanging from the doors. Moreover, the command element was left on the ground. After a short time, the helicopters returned to complete the loading, while the Army forces suppressed the fire from the jungle with return fire.

As they approached the landing zone, the pilots began to take small-arms fire and, apparently, refused to land, forcing the Rangers to jump from moving helicopters. The landing was completed successfully, but it was difficult getting the Marine helicopters back onto the landing zone because of the sporadic small-arms fire from the remaining defenders. Again, some officers wanted to file charges against the Marine pilots but were "counseled" out of doing so by their superiors.

By 6 p.m. on Wednesday October 26, the situation on the island had moved in favor of the American forces. The students from both True Blue and Grand Anse campuses had been evacuated.

One remaining strongpoint to be dealt with was Fort Frederic, perched high on a mountaintop overlooking the capital. It was a French fort built in the eighteenth century and during the invasion was manned by a small garrison. However, this garrison was able to hold off a force of platoon strength for almost five hours. U.S. forces had to call for air strikes and helicopter gunship support; two gunships were hit as they made repeated passes over the position's defenses. Unfortunately, the attacking aircraft mistook a mental hospital about three hundred yards to the north for the fort and attacked it, killing and wounding more than a score of patients and staff. Grenadian eyewitnesses say the defenders of the fort had moved the garrison's flag from the fort to the flagpole in front of the hospital and had set up a machine-gun position at the hospital gate. But according to officers responsible for settling damage claims, the military knew full well that a machine gun was positioned on the mental hospital grounds, and decided to attack the facility because it had become a combat area. The mental hospital was leveled, but neither the garrison's barracks nor the headquarters building located very close to the fort was touched. Not a single prisoner was taken. One Grenadian soldier was killed. Other than that, enemy opposition had vanished by the time the Americans took the fort. By the end of the day, U.S. troops were in complete command of St. George's and the surrounding hills.



By late Thursday night, October 27, Admiral Wesley MacDonald could report that "all major

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Although the major purpose of the operation was supposedly to rescue the medical students, the U.S. forces had almost no idea where the students were.

military objectives on the island were secured." By that time, some 5,000 paratroopers, 500 Rangers, and 500 Marines had been deployed on Grenada. All that was left was to mop up a few pockets of resistance, and this was taken care of by the 82nd. A few Grenadian soldiers took to the hills, but their resistance quickly petered out. By the end of the third day, Operation Urgent Fury had come to an end.

The best wars are those you cannot lose. Certainly, the invasion of Grenada falls into this category. From the beginning, there was never any doubt about the outcome. Given the great troop strength of the United States, its enormous technological superiority, its complete control of the skies, its ability to mass helicopters, air strikes, ground artillery, and, if necessary, fire from nearby ships (including two aircraft carriers), there was little likelihood that 500 Cubans and another thousand or so Grenadians could hold out very long. Even so, the Grenada operation was carried out with a large number of blunders. Had the operation met a slightly larger force that was more determined to fight and slightly better armed (say, with SA-7 shoulder-fired missiles or even a few modern antiaircraft guns), the United States would have had much greater difficulty subduing the defenders. From the perspective of military technique, the operation was full of flaws, some symptomatic of deeper pathologies within the American military structure.

Among the most glaring shortcomings was the intelligence failure. Despite access to the most advanced technology and to the complete resources of the American intelligence community, intelligence failed to provide adequate information about the location and strength of enemy positions. According to the Rangers, not even the positions around the airport landing zone were adequately known in advance. Ground units found the enemy's positions the hard way, by stumbling on them. Moreover, adequate maps were not available to U.S. ground units, and they did not become available until they were captured from the enemy. The Marines went into battle carrying old British maps, and the Army had tourist maps with improvised grid coordination systems. No terrain contours were shown. These maps had been hand-made and reproduced the night before the invasion, and they used different grid systems for locating points on the ground. According to the JCS, one consequence was that the air attack on Fort Frederic also destroyed the mental hospital because the hospital was not shown on the commanders' maps. In another case, an air strike called in by a Marine captain hit an Army command post, because the grid coordinates on the maps did not match. In this attack, one soldier was killed and 17 others wounded.

Although the major purpose of the operation was supposedly to rescue the medical students, the U.S. forces had almost no idea where the students were. They knew that there were students at the True Blue campus just yards away from the east end of the Point Salines runway. But only after reaching them did they learn that there was a second, larger group of students at the Grand Anse campus, four miles from the airport. Apparently, U.S. forces did not know about a third group at Lance aux Epines until the fourth day, when units conducting routine clearing operations stumbled on them. Yet President Reagan had delivered a television address announcing his concern about events in Grenada in March 1983—seven months before the invasion—and the island was open to anyone who wanted to visit it right up to the invasion. The telephone system worked, so that anyone could have called the medical school to obtain a list of dormitory locations.

Intelligence failures seem to be a continuing part of U.S. military operations. The one constant in the *Mayaguez* rescue, the Iran raid, and the Lebanon incursion is the intelligence failure. Each represents a failure to describe correctly the situation that friendly forces would face, or the failure to adequately locate the position, strength, and intentions of enemy forces.

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One also sees in Grenada a large ground force moving ponderously and cautiously to encounter and reduce enemy positions one at a time. U.S.

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ground tactics were simple enough. When an advancing unit came under fire, it stopped. Fire was returned, but no effort was made by the unit to overcome the resistance by fire and by maneuvering its units. Fire was returned to fix the target while air strikes and artillery were called in to "neutralize" it. Commanders were quoted as saying that in order to minimize civilian casualties in Grenada they decided against full-scale ground assaults, choosing instead to deploy small units backed by heavy air and artillery power. Just how such tactics would reduce damage and civilian casualties is unclear. Indeed, one would suspect exactly the opposite. The fact is that troops not properly trained to execute small-unit fire and maneuver tend to smoke out enemy positions and then neutralize them with superior air or artillery fire. This tactical approach works well as long as the attacking force has air superiority and as long as the enemy does not mount any kind of air defense. But such tactics instill excessive caution in small-unit commanders, who may be unable to develop and implement the much-heralded "combat initiative" that would supposedly provide the winning edge in a conflict.

Command and control of forces on the ground seem a perennial problem of the U.S. military, at least since the early days of the Vietnam war. Navy air strikes were delivered against Army positions on at least one occasion. U.S. forces have fired on one another elsewhere as well, it appears. Army ground units and Marine units are not able to talk directly to each other even though they may be deployed in the same area because their radio frequencies are different. Nor can Army units talk directly to Marine or Navy aircraft that may be called on to deliver air strikes in support of ground operations. Any request for air support must go through an air controller operating from a light aircraft over the battlefield. But the modern battlefield has become so lethal that the survivability of observation aircraft where the enemy has significant antiaircraft defense is very much in question. During the initial days of the Grenada operation, Army ground units had to send calls for air strikes back to their headquarters in Fort Bragg. The message was then relayed via satellite to the Navy commander, who passed the requests on to the air controller aboard the aircraft carriers.

It seems, unfortunately, characteristic of U.S. military operations to use forces from all four services. Whether any given operation should involve mixed forces seems to take second place to the desire of all four services to be involved. In the case of Grenada, at least one congressional military analyst, Bill Lind, has suggested that this was done in order to give each of the services an opportunity to get in on the show. The same consideration applies to the decision to combine men from both Ranger battalions, with two command elements, instead of using one unified battalion. The decision to employ the Rangers at all seems to have been pressed by the Army in order to increase support in Congress for a third Ranger battalion. In November 1984, a third battalion was authorized by Congress.

The decision to use the JSOC seems also to have been made for political reasons. None of the special operations missions executed by JSOC in Grenada, with the possible exception of the Delta Force drop on the airstrip hours before the official invasion, had any significant military value. As it was, all but one of them failed. Only the seizure of a diesel generating plant seems to have gone off successfully. Here a 16-man Seal team surprised and captured six civilian employees of the local power company on the morning of the first day of the invasion. But JSOC pressed for the opportunity to demonstrate that it could function well (Grenada was its first test), and Grenada provided a chance for the special operations community to rescue its prestige after the disaster in Iran. Four months after the invasion, the J-3 section of JSOC, the section responsible for plans and operations, was reorganized and a number of officers transferred.

In almost every military operation involving a combined force, beginning with Vietnam, the results have been either failure or poor performance, due to the complexitity of such operations and to the military-political problems entailed. These problems surfaced in Grenada, and they will show up again and again, as long as the JCS remains a jousting ground for parochial services and interests rather than an efficient planning mechanism.

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The military admits to 19 soldiers killed in Grenada. Of these, however, fewer than one-third were killed by hostile fire. The rest were killed by friendly fire, mistaken bombing attacks, helicopter crashes, and other accidents. In addition, 20 percent were wounded in these incidents. Although the "friction of war" always takes a toll, no army can expect to sustain itself in battle when more than half of its dead and one-fifth of its wounded are victims of its own fire. Such a high proportion of non-hostile-fire deaths also

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The Marines went into battle carrying old British maps, and the Army had tourist maps with improvised grid coordination systems. . . . An air strike called in by a Marine captain hit an Army post, because the grid coordinates on the maps did not match.

reflects poor training and inadequate readiness in basic combat skills.

The casualty numbers also appear to have been deliberately falsified initially by excluding from public reports those men killed and wounded in the special operations missions. If special operations casualties are included, the death toll jumps from 19 to 29, including the six Delta Force soldiers and the four Seals killed before the invasion officially began. Originally, the JCS listed 87 men as wounded. In response to press reports that the number of wounded was at least 28 more than the number released, the military adjusted its list to 115 wounded. When it was later reported by the press that the number who received Purple Hearts was higher than the number listed as wounded, the JCS again adjusted the number of wounded upward to 152.

According to Pentagon records, 25 Cubans were killed and another 59 wounded. The Pentagon initially admitted to having killed 45 Grenadian civilians and wounding another 358. However, after the *Providence Evening Bulletin* reported a discrepancy in the number, the military admitted to 67 Grenadian civilians killed. Even if the Pentagon's figures are accepted as accurate, the number of civilians killed and wounded is far too high for an operation of the size and intensity of Urgent Fury. Conversations with U.S. claims-settlement personnel on the island as well as with Grenadian civilians suggest that there was a good deal of indiscriminate shooting, mostly from the air, at targets that were not clearly identified. A favorite sport of helicopter gunship pilots in Grenada on "roam and kill" missions seems to have been to machine-gun livestock from the air. In one instance, an old woman was killed from AC-130 gunship fire, and in another, an infant was machine-gunned in her crib by helicopter fire.

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Whatever else the invasion of Grenada was, it was a political success. From the perspective of military bureaucracy it was also a success, insofar as almost every unit and officer that took part (and even many who did not) was able to enhance his career by being awarded a medal. It took the U.S. seven full battalions plus elements of two others to defeat fewer than 679 Cubans, no more than 50 of whom were trained combat soldiers. By contrast, the British Army defeated more than 11,000 Argentine soldiers with just eight infantry battalions in the Falklands war. And Great Britain awarded only 679 medals among the 28,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen who participated in the conflict. That conflict lasted 74 days and cost the British 255 lives, six warships, and almost a dozen aircraft. By comparison, 7,000 officers and men took part in the three days of Operation Urgent Fury, and in the weeks immediately following the end of hostilities, the Pentagon awarded 8,633 medals. Some who received medals undoubtedly deserved them. But simply showing up for the invasion and in some cases simply being in the Pentagon and tangentially related to the planning qualified one for a medal. As Grenada fades into memory, moreover, the military continues to issue medals. A report in the *Boston Globe* notes that the Army continued to award Armed Forces Expeditionary Medals to almost anyone involved in any way in the invasion. If the medals already awarded are added to those pending, the number approaches 19,600!

In the end, Grenada was a military success largely because it could be nothing else. The disparity of manpower and firepower guaranteed success. However, Grenada is more correctly viewed not as a legitimate success against a significant enemy but as a political operation orchestrated to convey the impression that the U.S. has military credibility. The fact that the operation was marred by a number of failures has generally gone unnoticed. What is intolerable—and dangerous—is that these failures have gone unnoticed by our military planners. That is a formula for future military disaster. We refused to learn from Vietnam; our refusal led to a decade in which the U.S. application of military force, five times in all, was marked by the same flaws. Our refusal to learn from Grenada does not bode well for our future. ■

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

36297

In the Matter of

Investigation of Access and Divestiture Related Tariffs	)	
	)	CC Docket No. 83-1145
Petitions for Reconsideration and Clarification of Allocation Plan Orders	)	Phase I

ERRATUM

Released: November 20, 1985

On November 14, 1985 the Commission released an Order, FCC 85-598, which contained a printing error. At para. 8 on page 5 the released Order reads "IXC TA HOKE TSE DOTE YAHPORNMAI,". It should read "IXC to make the date comparison".

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

William J. Tricarico
Secretary

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MISSED MOORINGS

American Novelists Lose Touch

by Nicholas Lemann

Not long ago the winners of the American Book Awards for 1985 were announced: Don DeLillo's *White Noise* in fiction and Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground* in nonfiction. Thankfully for the purveyors of the awards, which have been controversial lately, it was a quiet year. Nobody much complained. Both books were by well-known, veteran authors, both were well received, neither wore the glossy sheen of commercialism. God's in his Heaven; it seems churlish to disrupt the claim. But since the American Book Awards brought it up, it seems to me that when you hold the two books side by side, the work of fiction is clearly the lesser one. Whatever literature is, *Common Ground* comes closer to it than does *White Noise*. *White Noise* is funnier and more adept in its use of language. But reading *Common Ground*, and not *White Noise*, one has the feeling this is life; its characters are unruly, proud, idealistic, failure-prone, and deep but also ordinary—like *Huckleberry Finn*, it presents ordinariness and nobility as residing in everyone. By recounting the history of busing in Boston through the detailed history of three families and profiles of several public figures, it creates a rich tableau of American urban life, while also showing how our grandest dreams run aground.

Nicholas Lemann is a national correspondent for The Atlantic *and a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly.

If busing is Lukas's symbol of the American condition, DeLillo's is a large, vague, menacing cloud of toxic waste that invades the sunny middle-American college town where *White Noise* is set. In *Common Ground* we're brought down by our inability to be as good, in our social selves, as we think we are. Everything is spun out of a dense web of human character and motivation. In *White Noise*, the enemy is inanimate and extrinsic: the cloud and, in a larger sense, death. There's no reason for DeLillo to explore people's souls, and by and large, he doesn't.

I don't mean to be dogmatic about what the proper subject matter for great fiction must be. In particular, I want to give a wide berth to two much-discredited criticisms of American literature. The first is that the American novel is too negative in its view of American life. Over the years, critics who believe this have consistently overpraised "affirmative" novels that quickly fade into well-deserved obscurity and have argued against the merits of works of real genius. Today it seems to be a permanent oddity of the freest and richest society in history that it can't produce self-celebratory art—it's a quirk in our

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But reading *Common Ground*, and not *White Noise*, one has the feeling this is life: its characters are unruly, proud, idealistic, failure-prone, and deep but also ordinary.

national character—but that in no way justifies a dismissal of the grand procession of negative novelists, from Melville and Hawthorne on.

The second criticism is that the American novel isn't doing a good job of producing a realistic portrait of American life. It's true that social realism hasn't been the hallmark of American fiction for the past 40 years, but, as has been proven time and again, strict realism is not the one true path to greatness in the novel. Novelists should be judged on the basis of their skill as novelists, not as reporters, though a reportorial gift has been an important talent of many novelists. Sinclair Lewis and John O'Hara would have been first-rate reporters, but William Faulkner, a much greater novelist, would not.

The case for *Common Ground* over *White Noise* can be made without resorting to calling DeLillo either insufficiently affirmative or insufficiently realistic. *Common Ground* is the much more negative and depressing of the two books in its view of ordinary American life. *White Noise* is about people who live pleasant (though troubled) lives, and it ends on an upbeat (though strange) note, while *Common Ground* deals with poverty and with the hopelessness of our major social problem. Lukas is more realistic, but the territory on which DeLillo's novel takes place, Campusland USA, is one he obviously knows well, and he evokes it with great good humor. The problem with *White Noise* is more that its vision is too easily achieved, too pat.

Maybe DeLillo thinks a floating, unconnected menace says what he wants to say better than would a tragedy of misguided idealism? Well, maybe. But literature almost always has a relationship to its society; it doesn't have to be about society, in the manner of Trollope, but it's difficult for it to be completely self-referential either. Can you think of a great novel that doesn't address and say profound things about life outside the author's cranium? Cervantes evoked Spain; Joyce, Ireland; Tolstoy, Russia; Proust, France; Dickens, England; Faulkner, the South—and, not just accidentally, they did so on the way to revealing truths about the soul. A sense of society enriches fiction and helps it accomplish what it can. DeLillo's sense of our society is not compelling; it's what keeps *White Noise* from being great, not as journalism, but as a work of literary art. Other contemporary American novelists of high skill and ambition have the same insufficiency of richness in their social vision and hence in their literary achievement. It's not that these novelists aren't doing justice to American society. It's that the sense of society that they project—whether positive or negative, realistic or fabulous—is not conducive to literature.

White Noise, for its first 75 or 100 pages, reads almost like a parody of the standard intellectual's condemnation of American life—or at least it manages, like the early James Bond movies, to be both part of a genre and a parody of the genre at the same time. Its hero, Jack Gladney (byline: J.A.K. Gladney) is a professor, a lovable fraud who has carved out an eminence for himself as the founder and chairman of the Hitler Studies department at his university. This gives him a chance to muse pretentiously about horror and death in a setting of banal, commercialized America. There are long scenes at the supermarket. All Gladney's ex-wives are ex-CIA agents. He worries obsessively about environmental disasters. The combination of what appears to be a comfortable, happy existence with constant hints of apocalypse—DeLillo is making fun of the professoriate, isn't he? "The emptiness, the sense of cosmic darkness. Mastercard, VISA, American Express"—is a joke, right?

When the toxic cloud arrives and the Gladneys have to be evacuated, it seems as though DeLillo might still be kidding. Gladney's wife reads aloud to a group of evacuees a hilarious series of Jeane Dixon-style predictions from a tabloid: "From

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beyond the grave, dead living legend John Wayne will communicate telepathically with President Reagan to help frame U.S. foreign policy. Mellowed by death, the strapping actor will advocate a hopeful policy of peace and love." But at this point, alas, the fake-ominous mood begins to turn real-ominous. When Gladney muses, "The tabloid future, with its mechanism of hopeful twist to apocalyptic events, was perhaps not so very remote from our own immediate experience," DeLillo seems really to mean it.

There's one more funny scene when the evacuees realize they are being sent home without having gotten TV coverage ("Don't they know it's real? Shouldn't the streets be crawling with cameramen and soundmen and reporters? Shouldn't we be yelling out the window at them, 'Leave us alone, we've been through enough, get out of here with your vile instruments of intrusion' "). After that, it's overwhelmingly serious. In the end Gladney, tormented by a constant, nagging fear of death—that's the white noise of a supermarket or a car radio—finds a measure of respite, or redemption, or something, in a bloody shoot-out with his wife's lover.

DeLillo's toxic cloud, in other words, takes over not only his made-up town, but his novel, too, casting a pall of vague ominousness, unconnected to anyone's actions, over what began as a delightful comedy. Death, it's true, is vaguely ominous and usually undeserved. I think, however, DeLillo means the cloud to stand also for the life we live. The transition from the beginning of *White Noise* to the end is jarring because, under the ground rules DeLillo has set up, life's twists literally just descend from the sky—therefore there's no need for him to create a sense of the complexity of human interaction. Projected out, this implies a society that's sick in a kind of assumed, unproven way, without there being anything specifically wrong with it.

Of the critics who reviewed *White Noise*, the one who articulated this aspect of it best was Diane Johnson, who wrote in *The New York Review of Books* what amounts to a theoretical defense of the novel of unreality. She said that "novels of the person in society or the universe, making his or her way and making judgments on it" constitute "a distinguished tradition from Gulliver to Greene," but that it is "harder than ever to succeed in, now that plots demand an extreme imgaination if they are to surpass what is furnished by mere reality." That is, modern life has become so crazy that it's impossible to write the old-fashioned novel, and in fact unreality in fiction so well reflects the world around us that it's the true heir to the tradition of the novel of society. I doubt that the link between action and consequence has been severed in Johnson's own life, but she is so sure it has in everyone else's that she winds up taking the incredible position that those who accuse DeLillo of posturing (as did Jonathan Yardley of *The Washington Post*) are really attacking realistic fiction: "Without a willingness to engage the problems of the world around him, we would not have the novels of Dickens." *White Noise* represents engagement? Where are you, Orwell, when we need you?

Crude background

It's important to note that DeLillo is not the only one who portrays ordinary American life from the assumption that it's nightmarish and random. Most novelists choose not to try to infuse their work with an overall notion of our society, but usually the most accomplished and ambitious ones do, perhaps mindful that the most distinguished of their predecessors did, too. Last year, there were two novels besides *White Noise* that had a broad vision of America and were given the major-book treatment by critics:

Literature almost always has a relationship to society; it doesn't have to be about society, in the manner of Trollope, but it's difficult for it to be completely self-referential either. Can you think of a great novel that doesn't address and say profound things about life outside the author's cranium?

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The majority view in American letters today is still somewhere in the DeLillo-Banks-Gaddis area: American life is unreal and sterile for the middle class and degrading for the working class, and this is so obviously true that it's not necessary to convince the reader of it.

Continental Drift by Russell Banks and *Carpenter's Gothic* by William Gaddis. I don't single these out at random; other highly praised novels, for instance, *The Accidental Tourist* by Anne Tyler, were less ambitious in the social sense, and other ambitious social novels, like *Texas* by James Michener, didn't deserve to be, and weren't, taken seriously.

Continental Drift is, by design, a throwback to the Dreiser-Dos Passos-Steinbeck school of gritty American realism. It's about an oil-burner salesman in New Hampshire, Bob Dubois, who has an epiphany while Christmas shopping, smashes the windows of his station wagon, and decides to move his family to the Sunbelt—Central Florida, fast-money country. In his new setting, he begins an inexorable process of self-destruction that ends with his smuggling Haitians into the country and then being killed. But the tragic potential of the story isn't realized because there's a sense of foregone conclusions rather than of dashed hope. Piloting his Haitian-filled boat toward the coast, Bob imagines telling one of his passengers what's in store: "*America! Land, ho!* Only, like Columbus and all those guys looking for the Fountain of Youth, when you finally get to America, you get something else. You get Disney World and land deals and fast-moving high-interest bank loans, and if you don't get the hell out of the way, they'll knock you down, cut you up with a harrow and plow you under, so they can throw some condos up on top of you or maybe a parking lot or maybe an orange grove."

It's not just poor and working-class people who are ground to dust by society in *Continental Drift*; Banks uses the same mode of wooden condemnation to describe the lives of the bourgeoisie, for instance in this passage about vacationers driving down Interstate 95: "These people in an expensive hurry to have fun before heading back to their sad, workaday lives in Cleveland, Birmingham, and Bridgeport, their lives of high-tech retraining programs, day-long prowls through suburban malls to stock the house the bank keeps threatening to take away, lives with life insurance, dog food, and kitty litter, lawn mowers, orthodonture, special-ed and school-desegregation programs, lives that on the outside seem stable, rational, desirable, but on the inside persist in feeling strangely fragile, out of control, compulsive, and boring." Of course it would be possible for such sentiments to be at the heart of a work of literary art, but here they're not—they work against the interests of art because they're an arbitrary overlay, unearned. Banks doesn't show us, in the manner of *Babbitt*, that these lives are strangely fragile; it's just an assumption, or even a prejudice. If Banks had written *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck would have turned Jim in because in America, you can't fight the system. Bob's decline and fall would be much more resonant if it weren't for the occasional vision-of-America passage that makes it seem a matter of course.

The same problem—good foreground, crude background—occurs in a different form in *Carpenter's Gothic*. The action is as constricted as a play's: there are only four main characters, and every scene takes place in a lonesome old house on the banks of the Hudson River. Writing almost entirely in fragments of dialogue, without quotation marks or atribution. Gaddis is amazingly skillful at bringing alive his characters' interlocking pathologies.

Offstage, though, is the most slobbering, greedy, uncouth Middle America imaginable, spreading its stain of pseudo-religious corruption across the innocent world. There is a Jerry Falwell-style southern fundamentalist who's in league with corrupt politicians and with the executives of a minerals conglomerate called Voraker

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Consolidated Resources; the characters in the old house are variously involved in the evildoings, which are meant to lend world significance to their personal drama. All the beautiful subtle touches in Gaddis's evocation of his characters' lives are counterweighted by contemptuous, sledgehammering cliches about the booboisie. There's an Ur-boondocks called Smackover, a stronghold of the Falwell character (there really is a Smackover, in southern Arkansas, by the way); the hero of *Carpenter's Gothic* says about it, "People get up in the morning and go to bed at night in Smackover until the day they die and go someplace else, someplace that must look like Smackover at two in the morning." And a little later: "These smug idiots with their pious smiles they can't stand the idea they're descended from that gang at Lake Rudolf banging around with stone hammers trying to learn something no, they think God put them here in their cheap suits and bad neckties in his own image. . . ." As in the other two novels, what's annoying about this isn't that it's condemnatory, or that it's inaccurate, but that it's flat—that, though meant to add, it subtracts from the work as art.

Not every leading American novelist sees the country in the same way. Saul Bellow is a neoconservative. John Updike can be sweet and elegiac. Counter-examples could march on forever. But I'd guess that the majority view in American letters today is still somewhere in the DeLillo-Banks-Gaddis area: American life is unreal and sterile for the middle class and degrading for the working class, and this is so obviously true that it's not necessary to convince the reader of it.

Why does this view have such a strong hold, especially since it would seem to be the enemy of a writer who wants to be great? One possibility is that it's true. It's rare to see anyone say so directly—it's rare for any widespread assumption to be stated—so it's worth quoting at length someone making the case. This is from *The American Novel and the Way We Live Now*, by John W. Aldridge, a professor at the University of Michigan and a veteran critic with a reputation for being somewhat cranky but serious:

> We now take it for granted—and the fact creates around us a subliminal envelope of rehabilitating drama—that we inhabit a world in which violence of any and every kind can erupt anywhere and everywhere at any time with or without provocation or meaning. This is a world that some few of us experience every day, but for the rest of us it exists as an abstraction projected and often seemingly created by the reality-manufacturing and reality-fantasizing media of television and film. Our direct experience is usually of another kind of abstraction, an urban or suburban non-community in which we are perhaps most conscious of floating in disconnection between business and home, passing and being passed by strangers in the void. Home is a place of brief refuge from the void, where family offers a substitute for community even as house functions as a frontier stockade erected against the disorienting ambiguities of existence in non-community. Business or profession provides an illusion of connection with people whose only connection with us and with one another is coterminous activity within the same 'facility' or 'structure.' At intervals that have grown less and less frequent with the passage of time, the separate orbiting entities of business and home may, for ceremonial reasons, be momentarily joined, and strangers from the one will be imported into the other, given food and enough to drink to ensure that they will not be able to notice that they have nothing to say to one another. Anesthesia is the only possible means of coping with a situation in which nothing can be communicated among people for whom the terms and materials of communication, the shared histories and common assumptions of purpose and value, have ceased to exist.

On the other hand, let's consider the possibility that America isn't that way at all—that it's a society in which, in fact, there are shared assumptions and values to a remarkable degree, and where nearly everyone feels that there is something at stake in his life, that his actions will make a difference. Therefore the social sphere of plan, action, and consequence—the sphere Diane Johnson and John Aldridge say doesn't exist anymore—in truth is exactly where the national life takes place. Certainly it's the sphere where my life takes place and where most novelists' lives take place, and where their main characters' lives usually take place too. It's just for the society as a whole that, somehow, the rules are different. Perhaps the view that American life is pervasively unreal comes not from close study of the country, but from something about the literary life.

Every novelist needs material—it isn't an abstract medium. Typically the first novelist gets

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Experience is the wellspring of literary material, and in the main, the American writer's range has become narrower over the years.

his material from his own early life. What then? Some novelists find that the life of their own community provides the raw material for literature—Faulkner or Flannery O'Connor would be examples. Some can draw on their youth forever, some on the endless richness of their own thoughts. But even in the very front rank (for example, Norman Mailer and Philip Roth), running out of material becomes increasingly a worry with passing years.

The reason is that experience is the wellspring of literary material, and in the main, the American writer's range of experience has become narrower over the years. Can anyone really doubt that a wide range of experience is important to a novelist? Cervantes was a soldier, a slave, and a bureaucrat; Tolstoy was a nobleman, a teacher, and an urban swinger; Dostoevsky was an engineer and a political prisoner; Dickens was a court reporter, Melville went to sea, and Twain worked in the West and on the Mississippi. Even in high-modernist America, writers write from their own lives. The experience of serving in World War II incubated the talents of Mailer and James Jones. Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison could write about the great migration of rural southern blacks to the North because they had lived it. Updike didn't get Rabbit Angstrom's Pennsylvania town from watching television, nor Roth the old Jewish Newark, nor Bellow his Chicago of deep thinkers and con artists. Experience alone of course does not make one a novelist, but it's a necessary part of the training.

Today, if the first novel about growing up is successful, the American novelist usually moves directly to a university campus, or (if the success is both critical and commercial) to the New York *haut monde* or (if it's just commercial) to someplace warm like Beverly Hills or Aruba. Instantly, he's cut off from all but a small group of people very much like himself, and there's a fierce temptation to sketch in the rest of the world in his fiction by just fleshing out their hazy impressions and prejudices about what it's like. We have many, many novels about writers or professors leading essentially solitary lives. On the other hand, the novelist whose life somehow gives him a way of seeing the rest of society so that he can use it in his work, like Louis Auchincloss, is regarded as an oddity, a man-bites-dog story.

One way out of the trap of being shut off from experience is to go out and seek it, expressly with the idea of gathering material for fiction. This was fairly common, not just in the nineteenth century in Europe but up until World War II in America. Ernest Hemingway roamed the world in search of raw, vital adventure, partly because in those days serious novels sold better, so he could afford to. To prepare to write *Arrowsmith*, Sinclair Lewis went on a two-month sea cruise with the famous bacteriologist Paul DeKruif, in order, in the words of Mark Schorer's biography of Lewis, "to educate Lewis in bacteriology and epidemiology and in the methods and spirit of research, to observe conditions in the tropics. . .and to work out on paper as complete an outline of the story as possible. They were equipped with a small library of medical textbooks, maps, and charts. . . ." For *Elmer Gantry* he went to Kansas City, attended many church services, and actually preached himself. John Steinbeck, before writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, traveled extensively in migrant camps in California and read hundreds of pages of reports by government workers in the camps. Theodore Dreiser relied heavily on his early work as a journalist to the point of reproducing long passages from his newspaper stories verbatim in writing *Sister Carrie*.

Today, bestselling novelists of no artistic pretensions, like Michener and Arthur Hailey, still do lengthy research, but literary novelists usually don't. There is the economic reason that they don't have enough of an audience to pay travel expenses, and while the 1945-75 education boom created a comfortably salaried place for them, a teaching schedule makes it hard to get

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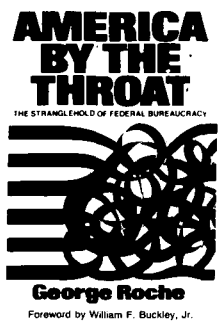
1. _____ spent $_____ studying stewardesses and determined that their noses average 2.18 inches long.
2. The Pentagon spends $_____ to make a grilled cheese sandwich.
3. The FDA issued an urgent warning about valentine candies. What was the thrust of this emergency declaration?
4. How much would environmental testing of a zero-gravity toilet cost?
5. What would a complete study of frisbees cost, roughly?
6. On April 29, 1981, an ordinary day in the bureaucracy, the U.S. government spent $_____ for goggles.
7. Name the august body that voted unanimously to prohibit the importation of killer bee semen. (Problem, points out Roche: no one knows how to obtain killer bee semen.)
8. Not counting the military arm, what is the cost of the federal bureaucracy, annually, per person in the U.S.?

AMERICA BY THE THROAT
The Stranglehold of Federal Bureaucracy

by
George Roche
President, Hillsdale College
Former Chairman,
National Council on Educational Research



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away. But the changing literary zeitgeist was probably even more important in taking novelists away away from experience. The idea steadily grew that all artists are geniuses whose highest achievement is a kind of pure creativity that expresses the full complexity and depth of the individual consciousness. There were high priest critics who said so, and it was just in the air in postwar bohemia, when society seemed dull and abstract artists were glamorous, daring figures. If the Holy Grail is genius-level expression of the self, then going to examine "conditions"—or even worrying about where to get material—seems less important. Isn't every novelist's brain permanently accessible to him? What else really matters?

A wonderful example is Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*, his book about the 1967 march on the Pentagon. Having turned to journalism in part because he had run out of material, Mailer actually wrote (granted, brilliantly) about his own life as a middle-aged important novelist: Here I am speaking to the students about peace, while wondering whether Dwight MacDonald will give my latest book a good review. He perfectly captured the literary man's odd combination of being obsessed with the progress of his own life, while also being convinced that the life of the nation was deranged and senseless. And the critical reception of *The Armies of the Night* was truly ecstatic.

There does now seem to be a slight swing back toward rummaging around for material. DeLillo, Banks, and Gaddis are all examples: DeLillo learned higher mathematics for an earlier novel called *Ratner's Star*, Banks fills pages of *Continental Drift* with arcane Creole dialect and voodoo rituals, and Gaddis's admirers always point to his work as a freelance corporate speechwriter as having given him special insights into the business culture. But that makes the results even more depressing—experience is supposed to teach you to stop sneering, to cure you of the temptation to think of the mass of people as fools, or pathetic victims, or emptyheaded bigots. Gaddis's passages on Smackover, and Banks's on the utter emptiness of the lives both the Haitian immigrants to Florida and of the members of the middle class to which they aspire, show that for them, the deepest lesson of experience is unlearned.

The reason for this, aside from the long-term effect of a cloistered life, must surely be the prophet-without-honor aspect of being a serious American novelist, which leads to a tendency toward self-pity and a contempt for society that's so strong it can triumph over any material. For all but a handful of novelists, it's not even that they're hated—it is, worse, that the non-literary world is just unaware of them. (One key to Mailer is a desperate need to be noticed.) Put yourself in the shoes of a serious American novelist, someone just below the top five or six celebrities, for a moment. You've written six novels that have won the highest praise from the literary community, and you have been given its richest rewards: publication, professorships, grants. But your books sell 3,000, 5,000, 8,000 copies each. Not only are you a professor literally, you're a professor in the sense that no one outside your field seems to know your work. You open the newspaper: President Reagan has decided to bestow a medal on a novelist, and it's Louis L' Amour. No wonder American life seems unreal. No wonder when you see throngs of happy-looking, well-fed people in the Safeway or the airport, you wonder what they can possibly be thinking about—wonder, that is, until you flip on the TV and it becomes apparent what the answer is. No wonder the alienation of your brethren in Europe, though born of totalitarianism and the ravages of war, seems an appealing stance. John Aldridge, in a more lucid moment than the one quoted above, points out that Lewis and Dreiser wrote with the expectation that they would be listened to, and so wrote to shock and to convince. A writer who thinks most people aren't listening might use his writing as a way to return the compliment.

So the temptation for the American novelist is to disengage from society and from experience: it's cheaper, it fits better with the current idea of genius, it's easier on the legs, and it's a political-cultural role that seems to make sense, given the place the country makes for its serious writers. *White Noise* is about a disengaged tragedy, *Continental Drift* is disengaged from its own characters, and *Carpenter's Gothic* is disengaged from what's supposed to be the menace hulking in the wings. None of them has at its core a sense of the promise and disappointment of every life. Disengagement is not the way to art—even Proust in his bed was deeply engaged intellectually in every nuance of the world his characters inhabited, and didn't paint people as idiots or pawns. It leads to woodenness, even lifelessness; it leads away from the best lessons that a varied life can teach. What's lost when novelists assume automatic postures about the social context in which they place their work is not so much the story of what's going on in our country (though that is lost, too), but the chance to produce literature. ■

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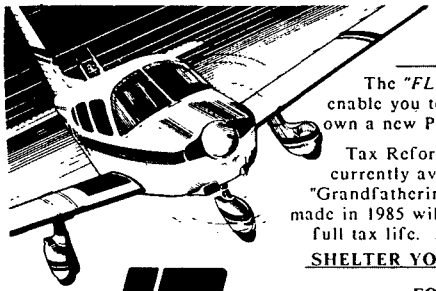

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In response to a recently enacted Texas law requiring high school students to achieve passing grades to play on sports teams, the state's high school coaches have formed a political action committee to oppose Gov. Mark White and legislators who voted for the plan.

◆

YES, SOME

This Christmas season an entrepreneurial Marine marketed a board game called "The Subway Vigilante Game." With the New York City subway system as the board, players try to get to the Bronx alive using a minimum of bullets from their miniature snub-nosed guns to fight off the thugs that cross their paths. "Some people say it's sick, it's distasteful," the inventor said. "That limits the market some."

◆

BRAINS WERE DEEMED ESSENTIAL ONLY FOR THE CLERICAL STAFF

The Labor Department is considering dropping a requirement that the government pay federal employees for the work-related loss of seven body parts, including male sex organs, breasts, kidneys, and lungs. The proposal is based on a belief that those particular organs are not essential for the generation of income.

◆

EACH DIPLOMA COST 700% MORE THAN ADVERTISED

Some 200 federal employees have purchased fake diplomas or degrees, according to the FBI. Seventy-five of them are employed by the Defense Department.

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Heavy Losses: The Dangerous Decline of American Defense. James Coates, Michael Kilian. *Viking, $22.95.* It is hard to read any couple of months' clippings on the Pentagon without a lurking sense of unease. Here a major weapon scores a pyrotechnical fizzle. There a contractor is indicted. There again the command bureaucracy coughs and stumbles at some especially sensitive point.

Reporters and congressional staffs do a brisk trade in these "horror stories." Most make for one-day headlines, but the best of them—the $435 hammer, the interservice bickering over transport of wounded marines, the stunning incompetence of the Sergeant York gun—wend their way into folklore, told and retold to suit the prejudice of the teller.

For a layman the moral is ambiguous. An impression accumulates that something is seriously wrong—but what?

Coates and Kilian try to tell us, but they have undertaken two incompatible tasks. One is a wide-ranging polemic on everything from procurement to strategic nuclear doctrine, which begins with the thesis that "American defense simply does not work." The other is a walking tour of the military establishment, with 21 brief chapters on the chain of command, the Soviet threat, congressional oversight, industrial contractors, the structure of American alliances, and so on. Both parts—the polemic and the textbook—have points in their favor, but the product as a whole is disappointing.

Both long-time writers for *The Chicago Tribune*, Coates and Kilian might have done with their book what cannot easily be done on deadline: delve deeply into a problem or craft a narrative to match the complexity of their subject. Instead they labor through what amounts to a 21-part series. In fact, it's worse than that. Most of the chapters cover so broad a canvas ("The Red Menace," "The Hill," "Friends and Enemies") and do so little new reporting, that they fail to match newspaper work at its best.

The book does come alive in its anecdotes. Chapter one, a 12-page profile of Air Force Colonel Christopher Branch, is a vivid portrayal of the life and social environment of "the high-tech Pentagon breed—the kind of officers who have the most to do with running the military and who have the best hope of becoming generals." Then there is the not-so-funny tale of the time Ronald Reagan's "football officer," the man who carries the nuclear war codes for fighting, was left stranded at the Washington Hilton after the president was shot in 1981. Elsewhere we find then-Senator John Tower intervening with the commander of the Naval Academy to overturn an injunction against off-duty cowboy boots.

But Coates and Kilian wear hard on the reader's confidence in their judgment. *Heavy Losses* is badly hyped. The authors ruin that vignette about the cowboy boots, for example, with the following introduction (about "congressional warlords"): "Some of the mighty are mightier than others. Senator John Tower, as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was so powerful that his reach extended into the footlockers of Annapolis." C'mon, fellas.

The book is full of non sequiturs and annoying reductionist judgments, few of them adorned with further argument. The "effective decision time for responding to an

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enemy nuclear attack [has been] reduced to about six minutes, yet Reagan took several months to decide whether to remove American marines from Lebanon." Military forces "do not occupy territory, achieve objectives, restore governments, project power, or keep the peace. They kill, maim, and destroy." In these and other epigrams, Coates and Kilian rarely reveal any suspicion that there is anything more to be said.

Procurement makes for the best sustained argument and the strongest chapter of the book. Reporters like stories about $1,118 stool caps and $435 hammers because any layman can see their absurdity at once. But what are we to suppose about the price of sophisticated military technology? Are our major weapons systems priced with the same keen, competitive eye? Are we paying $100 billion, say, for just a billion dollars' worth of capability?

Coates and Kilian show persuasively that the answer is often yes. Blending statistical evidence with blood-boiling case histories, they describe a procurement culture in which "careers rise or fall as a function of the 'success' [read "budget"] of the weapons project." The authors show clearly and concisely how "the same procurement officers whose jobs [depend] on the survival of the project [are] placed in charge of tests and evaluation" and how they conspire to falsify test results; how Pentagon officers routinely move from oversight of purchases to lucrative employment with their former suppliers; how the Defense Department's "cost-plus" payment system encourages suppliers to inflate every "cost" to the limits of credulity and then tack on 15 percent for "profit."

Heavy Losses is thus a sensible counterpoint to the natural impulse to blame horror stories on corporate greed. Greed there is aplenty, but the system invites it—and, from the point of view of the procurement elite, actually thrives on it.

Whoever did the invoicing at Boeing in the case of the overpriced stool cap, for example, followed DOD rules to the letter as they

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN
on the state of the American family

Photo: Diana H. Walker

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dreamed up hundreds of dollars in costs. Let's see, they reckoned, we'll start with overhead at the factory and all its employees, add machine design, tool, and production planning, a day or so of "inspection," and so on. This has always reminded me of those late-night UHF television ads: "Just imagine what it would cost you to hire the whole London Philharmonic to play a concert in your living room. Probably tens of thousands of dollars. But now, for the low, low price of $9.95, you can have this classic recording. . . ." At the Pentagon, they not only buy the record, they pay the tens of thousands, too.

Apart from procurement, Coates and Kilian are most concerned about the chain of command. They decry the duplication among services, the failure to coordinate, and the lack of a professional general staff. Some of the authors' recommendations are well supported and at least remotely possible, such as making the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (now outside the chain of command altogether) the supreme uniformed commander of the armed forces. Others have an air of sweeping unreality about them: "The Air Force as presently constituted. . . should be abolished . . . .The Army, Navy, and Marines would assume command of all offensive tactical air units, a move that would allow the Army to junk much of its vulnerable helicopter armada. . . ."

The larger theme of *Heavy Losses* is the accusation of its subtitle. Are American defenses in a state of "dangerous decline"? It seems to me that Coates and Kilian jump too quickly between two arguments. The first is that our military bureaucracy is badly flawed and getting worse. The second is that the United States consequently has diminished as a world power.

"The United States," the authors insist, "has not won a war since V-J Day." If winning a war meant extracting unconditional surrender, Coates and Kilian might have a point, excepting Grenada and other small episodes in this hemisphere. But unconditional surrender is a product of unlimited war, and unlimited war involving a superpower is nothing to be wistful for. In the context of limited wars with limited objectives, Korea was patently a success.

In one sense Coates and Kilian are right to observe a decline in American power, but their frame of reference is far too limited. The American preeminence of the 1940s and 1950s was a product of the weakness of others. We were the only power to emerge from World War II without catastrophic damage to our populace, our economy, or our fighting force. Europe, Japan, and the Soviet Union have since recovered from their postwar lows. America's relative power, in the process, was bound to be reduced.

The authors ascribe too much of this decline in power to military mismanagement, which has been with us longer than they seem willing to acknowledge. SNAFU came into the language in World War II, and as every serviceman knows, its first two letters stand for "Situation Normal." The authors themselves report that America's first warplane (built to rigid Army specifications in 1908 by Orville and Wilbur Wright) cost $30,000, fully $29,200 more than the one that made history at Kitty Hawk.

These reservations aside, the

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authors' central point—their first argument—is surely right. The early adventures of the military-industrial complex are as nothing to the present state of affairs. Things *are* getting worse. Coates and Kilian quote a half-serious projection, based upon the historic quadrupling of aircraft costs each decade, that by 2054 "the entire defense budget will purchase just one tactical aircraft." They might have added that the armed services will be too busy fighting each other to fly it.

—*Barton Gellman*

Politics. Edward I. Koch with William Rauch. *Simon & Schuster, $17.95.* Ruminating is not what Ed Koch does best. But that is just what he does in *Politics*, the follow-up to his best-selling memoir, *Mayor*. In *Mayor*, Koch wielded his dictaphone like a stiletto, skewering friends and adversaries alike and providing a revealing picture of what it is like to run the nation's largest city. In *Politics*, Koch takes the high road—and loses the zest that made *Mayor* so popular.

Each of *Politics*'s chapters focuses on one aspect of the sweet science of running and governing—"Party Loyalty," "Coalition Building," "Ethnic Politics," and the like. (Not surprisingly for Koch, the shortest of the chapters is called "Sharing.") As in *Mayor*, Koch explains by way of anecdote, but most of the material this time comes from the years before he became mayor in 1978. Koch's nine years in Congress and two years on the New York City Council, however, do not yield the same lode as did his first two terms as mayor. Consequently, the whole book has the feel of a not-quite-greatest-hits collection of *chutzpah* hand-me-downs.

The frustration of *Politics* is that Koch doesn't ask himself the hard questions that would produce a tougher—and better—book. Koch has run and won as a champion of the embattled middle class; he's become the rumpled symbol of their struggle against the fashionable platitudes of the day. Emblematic of his transformation from a standard liberal was his opposition, in the early 1970s, to an enormous and ill-conceived public housing project that was to be plunked down in the center of middle-class Forest Hills, Queens. There can be little doubt now that Koch was on the right side of that issue, and, as mayor, he has been dedicated to the principle that government must serve society's haves, as well as its have-nots. Contrary to the mayor's assertion, however, this world view reflects—rather than defies—today's conventional political wisdom. In Ronald Reagan's America, it seems routine—fashionable even. If Koch really wanted to be courageous and unfashionable, he'd tell the other side of the story: how his city is going to take care of the low-income folks who were denied access to Forest Hills. Now *that* would take *chutzpah*.

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

Some American Men. Gloria Emerson. *Simon and Schuster, $17.95.* Collecting information, said Mark Twain, is like collecting garbage: you must know what you are going to do with the stuff before you start rounding it up. The stuff of Gloria Emerson's book is in disparate chunks, seemingly drawn from unrelated projects, few of them suited to the arguments surrounding them.

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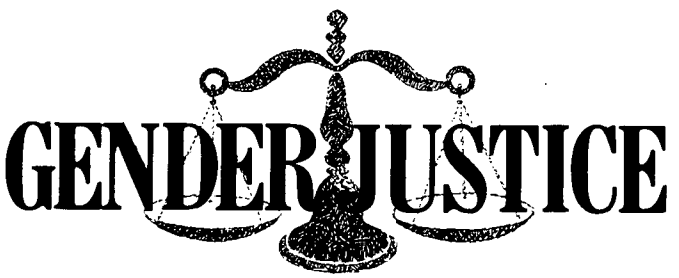

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There are reports on Vietnam—the war, the Thai refugee camps, the veterans, and Agent Orange victims—much of it related to her earlier work—*Winners and Losers*.

There are her interviews with the poor and her statistics on poverty, unemployment, and the depredations of Reaganomics. And she presents her gallery of profiles of American men, chosen, she tells us, "by chance or by design. . . .One conversation began in a grocery store in New Jersey when I asked a man I mistook for the manager where the dry mustard might be found." Among others, she talks with a laid-off auto worker in Ohio, a Princeton student with a working-class background who plays in a rock band, a disgruntled *New York Times* Africa correspondent, and a consultant on "workplace deviance." Finally, and quite apart from the rest, are Emerson's own reflections on American manhood in a changing society.

The questions she asks in this vein are undeniably fascinating. How do men reconcile the old expectations with the new? How have they changed their views of women, money, and their daughters? What do machismo and the army mean to them now? But Emerson does not seem to have begun focusing on the themes until after she finished her reporting. The long profiles, works of keen and copious detail, imply a few vague answers. The interview subjects barely address the questions. Emerson blames this all too easily on the inability of men to "open up," a point she drives home by haranguing a Vietnam veteran: "You can't be made of ice. It's not wrong or shaming to be afraid."

Mostly, though, she relies for framework and transitions on a peculiar quasi-oracular narrative in which she generalizes and refers to the present in the past tense. For instance, "That year [what year?] it was not unusual for American females to work for construction companies, be lawyers, deputy sheriffs, bus drivers. . . .Men stopped saying women were not good drivers, but when a couple was seen in a car it was the man at the wheel. Men pushing strollers were not considered odd or silly." She blows anecdotes into "significant" trends: "Fewer women profess they must 'love' a man before fornication, and some women, young, who have casual affairs in the apartments of men do not choose to spend the night there but get up, dress, and go home alone. Sleeping with them is too intimate, one said, a 31-year-old physician."

More harmful to the author's credibility are the careless observations that shade into stereotype. Of men she writes, "Because masculinity is said to be on endless trial during the lives of men, men must ceaselessly convince themselves. . . ." Of what? We never really find out, but Emerson still concludes, "None of this do they seem to know or be able to acknowledge." Of women: "If they join the army they are not apt to outwit anyone. . . .They stay in the lower ranks and are obedient, deciding almost nothing, with men who do not know more."

Anecdotes can resonate only if connected to some broader evidence of the phenomenon they purport to illustrate. That evidence is missing from Emerson's book as a whole. Its absence not only saps her credibility but makes her basic argument difficult to grasp or define. From the book's chapter titles, introduction, and final few paragraphs, you'd think the author had unearthed an important and little-examined side of American feminism. As men change their views of women, this argument seems to go, they also change their views of their own experience and aspirations; they learn to express emotion freely, to rethink love and ambition and war. If true, this is tremendously important. But we will not learn it from Emerson's men, who, however much they "open up" to her, talk mainly about older preoccupations such as their stoicism in war or their deep attachment to their fathers. It's a shame the argument and the reportage don't match. Emerson's reportorial eye is so sharp, one wishes she had gathered her material in support of some other argument.

—Amy E. Schwartz

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Village Journey: The Report of the Alaska Native Review Commission. Thomas R. Berger. *Hill & Wang, $16.95.* In 1971, Congress passed the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which has been called by many the best settlement ever of native claims. It may, however, prove to be one of the subtlest tools ever used, even if unintentionally so, to dispossess American natives.

Congress declared that the settlement of native land claims was to be accomplished "without establishing any permanent racially defined institutions, rights, privileges, or obligations...." Assimilation was the intent. Congress didn't want another "reservation system" with its attendant privileges and dependencies; it wanted natives, Berger says, "to become part of the commercial and corporate mainstream of America." Economic development of the land was to be the "principal means of improving social and economic conditions in Native Alaska."

But here the intentions of Congress clashed with traditional native culture and values. While Congress wanted them to develop the land, many natives preferred to continue to use it for subsistence living. While Congress wanted to give the land to individuals as shareholders, many natives believed the land should be held only by the community—to be shared according to need and preserved for their children. It is the land that has allowed Alaska natives to maintain the culture and their sovereignty. Yet there are natives who are already part of the mainstream of America, or who would like to be, who want to profit from the sale of their shares, or the development or sale of the land. Faced with this conflict over the use of the land, Congress gave final priority to the individual's rights over the community's. That choice has increased discord among the natives. "More than anything else," says Berger, "ANCSA has divided Alaska Natives....Village and subsistence against region and profit, village shareholders against at-large shareholders, urban shareholders against village shareholders, urban

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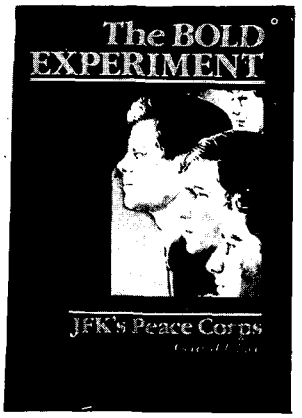

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corporations against village corporations."

ANCSA gave Alaska natives title to 44 million acres of land—approximately 10 percent of Alaska. In compensation for the remaining 90 percent, they were granted $962.5 million. This doesn't sound like a bad settlement, especially when you consider that most of the 90 percent is still publicly held and therefore open, though with restrictions, to hunting and fishing. But the terms of the settlement and the conflicts they have engendered or exacerbated may ultimately cost the natives their land.

Title to the land is held by 12 regional and hundreds of village corporations set up under the act; natives are exclusive shareholders in the corporations. But running the corporations under the terms of ANCSA is expensive. The costs of surveying and transferring ownership of the land, issuing stock, litigating disputes, and filing audits and reports have drained many corporations. Legal services for dividing revenues from underground natural resources among the corporations alone have cost them nearly $35 million. The Alaska Native Foundation estimates that each village corporation must find $70,000 every year to meet its requirements. In addition, few natives are trained to manage a corporation and many new executives, says Berger, have found themselves "at the mercy of the lawyers, advisers, and consultants who flocked to the villages like scavengers." Congress hoped that the corporations could develop their lands, building a stable economic base for Alaska natives. But while some corporations have done well, prices for the few resources they have, such as timber, oil and gas, have been falling. And much of the land held by other corporations is tundra, which offers little to profit from. Some corporations are already selling their land to meet expenses, and, says Berger, "more than one regional corporation and many village corporations are in danger of going bankrupt."

Each of nearly 80,000 natives might have received $12,000 had the $962.5 million been divided equally. Instead, it was invested for them in the corporations. Poor corporate performance has kept the return on that investment low. At-large shareholders, who don't live in the villages, have received $6,000; the average villager received $375.

In 1991, some of the current restrictions of the settlement will be lifted. The land may then be taxed by state or local governments and shares in the corporations may then be sold to non-natives. Many natives fear they may lose their land to creditors, outsiders, or the government. Many are now bitterly angry about the choices Congress made when it settled their claims.

Although most Alaska natives seem to want the terms of the settlement changed, they are not united as to how this should be done. But Berger's book makes it clear that resolving the conflict over the use of the land and deciding how far they become assimilated into Western culture are decisions that rightfully belong to the Alaska natives, not Congress.

—*Kitry Krause*

Lost Children: The Story of Adopted Children Searching for Their Mothers. Polly Toynbee. *Hutchinson.* Caroline Barnes, a beautiful woman in her mid-twenties, had two distinct fantasy images of her mother when she was growing up. In one her mother was ultra-glamorous, a Joan Collins, "beautiful and glittery." In the other vision, she was a poor little Irish waif, burdened with children, too poor to take care of Caroline.

Tom O'Mara had few fantasies about his mother, just a grinding obsession to know the woman who made him ashamed of his origins. His curiosity and anger accelerated when he heard that she had had another son whom she had also named Thomas.

Georgina Ellis knew everything she needed to know about her mother. In fact, she read it in a faded newspaper clipping she found in a drawer when she was eight. Her mother, Ruth Ellis, had murdered her lover when Georgina was three, and achieved a macabre distinction. She was the last woman hanged in

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England.

Polly Toynbee, an English journalist and a former editor of this magazine, explores the psychological and sociological concerns of Caroline, Tom, Georgina, and others, and looks for their common threads. It is an elegant, provocative, and poignant study of children who have grown up without their original parents (which some euphemistically call "birth parents") and are usually obsessed with questions (often without answers) about themselves and their families.

The basic question Toynbee asks is one that her subjects feel passionately about: whether it's a good idea for adoptive parents to preserve the secrecy about the original parents. Should official adoption records that guarantee confidentiality to "birth parents" be open later to the child? In 17 states there is a "mutually voluntary registry," where medical information and other biographical facts can be retrieved. Seven states will search for a parent or child at the seeker's expense, if it's understood that either can veto exposure once the search succeeds. Two states allow records to be opened to the adult child. All states have "good cause" statutes, which means that records can be opened when the reason is good enough—such as the need to know about an inherited disease.

Toynbee wants to do away with the deception inherent in most adoptions. She contends that cutting a child away from its mother is profoundly out of keeping with all that we know about child care. "At the time of adoption, or any time afterwords," she says, "a natural mother should be able, and indeed should be encouraged, to seek some access to her child."

She concedes that such an arrangement would be asking a great deal of adopters, who are particularly vulnerable in the early years of their lives with an adopted child. But she believes the rewards available to the child outweigh the risks. She oversimplifies the degree to which the child could be confused by a dual set of parents (usually two mothers, since the "birth father" is generally long gone). And analogies drawn from the complicated sets of relations that have occurred as a result of divorce are not quite as persuasive as she thinks.

But she scrupulously considers all sides of the issue, animating abstractions with dramatic personal stories, showing how "human emotions rarely fit so neatly into tidy compartments, especially when they deal with some of the most fundamental feelings about identity, heredity and lineage."

Lost Children has been published in England, but so far, not here. A publisher ought to make it available in this country, too.

—*Suzanne Fields*

The Divorce Revolution. Lenore Weitzman. *Free Press. $19.95.* The no-fault divorce laws that proliferated in the 1970s were expected to solve many problems. They were supposed to lessen the bitterness that usually arises out of divorce proceedings, erase some of the stigma of being sued successfully for divorce, and eliminate the nasty process of providing grounds for divorce by proving or fabricating proof that the other spouse committed some unwholesome act. Most important, no-fault was supposed to treat men and women as equal partners and, when a marriage failed, allow them to walk away with more or less equal shares of the family wealth.

Lenore Weitzman says no-fault has in some ways performed as advertised but also has had the unforeseen side effect of undercutting its most important goal. Under no-fault laws, divorce settlements have left many women, especially those with children, in much worse financial shape than under previous laws.

Divorce has always been a costly proposition for husband and wife alike. In the old days, Weitzman says, the wife was typically the "innocent" party and as such was awarded the family house plus other benefits. She did not live as well as she had before the divorce, but neither did her former husband. Now that we have no-fault, divorce remains expensive, but the cost is borne mostly by the wife. After a no-fault divorce, Weitzman says, the wife's standard of living

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declines an average of 73 percent. Freed from many of the burdens of supporting a family, the former husband gets treated to a 42 percent rise in his standard of living.

How could this have happened? Weitzman says that no-fault's crucial error was to grant women equal rights without equal opportunities. After a no-fault settlement, the woman theoretically receives half the family's material possessions and half the net income for a certain period of time. After that point, each of the former spouses is on his or her own. The assumption is that the former wife and husband have economic parity with one another; usually, though, they don't. The court's division of the spoils takes into account only existing, tangible assets. So the wife with little job experience because of her years raising children may have to start from scratch in the working world while her former husband already has a position, professional experience, benefits, and salary. The economic future suddenly looks better to him; to his ex-wife, it looks much worse.

Weitzman proves her thesis with an array of statistics, case studies, court records, and conversations with lawyers, judges, and divorced men and women that are extremely persuasive. The judges' comments in particular help explain how the seemingly simple and sensible concept of no-fault divorce has become so unfair and confusing in its effects.

For example, the judges use a supply-side rationale to justify imposing an informal 50 percent ceiling on income awards. "You have to have enough money for him to be satisfied, to give him incentive to keep earning and improving in his profession," said one judge. In practice, judges often are so concerned with the man's economic well-being they allow him two-thirds of his income while his former wife has to live on one-third. They also think awards should be kept low in order to get women off the dole and into the business of providing for themselves.

The author offers a number of suggestions for undoing some of no-fault's damage. In general, they focus on protecting the most vulnerable people, such as women who are divorced after many years as homemakers, mothers of young children, and the children themselves. Weitzman convincingly describes how "rules for divorce are changing the rules for marriage" and affecting family life. First, the ease of undoing marriage leads couples into it with a sense of transience and less commitment. Second—and much worse, because it involves children—no-fault has sent out the message that sacrificing career for family is a sucker's game. The mother who is not prepared to re-enter the work force instantly can be left impoverished. The father who has not sacrificed a thing is suddenly an affluent bachelor, with his practical responsibilities as parent considered "optional."

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